

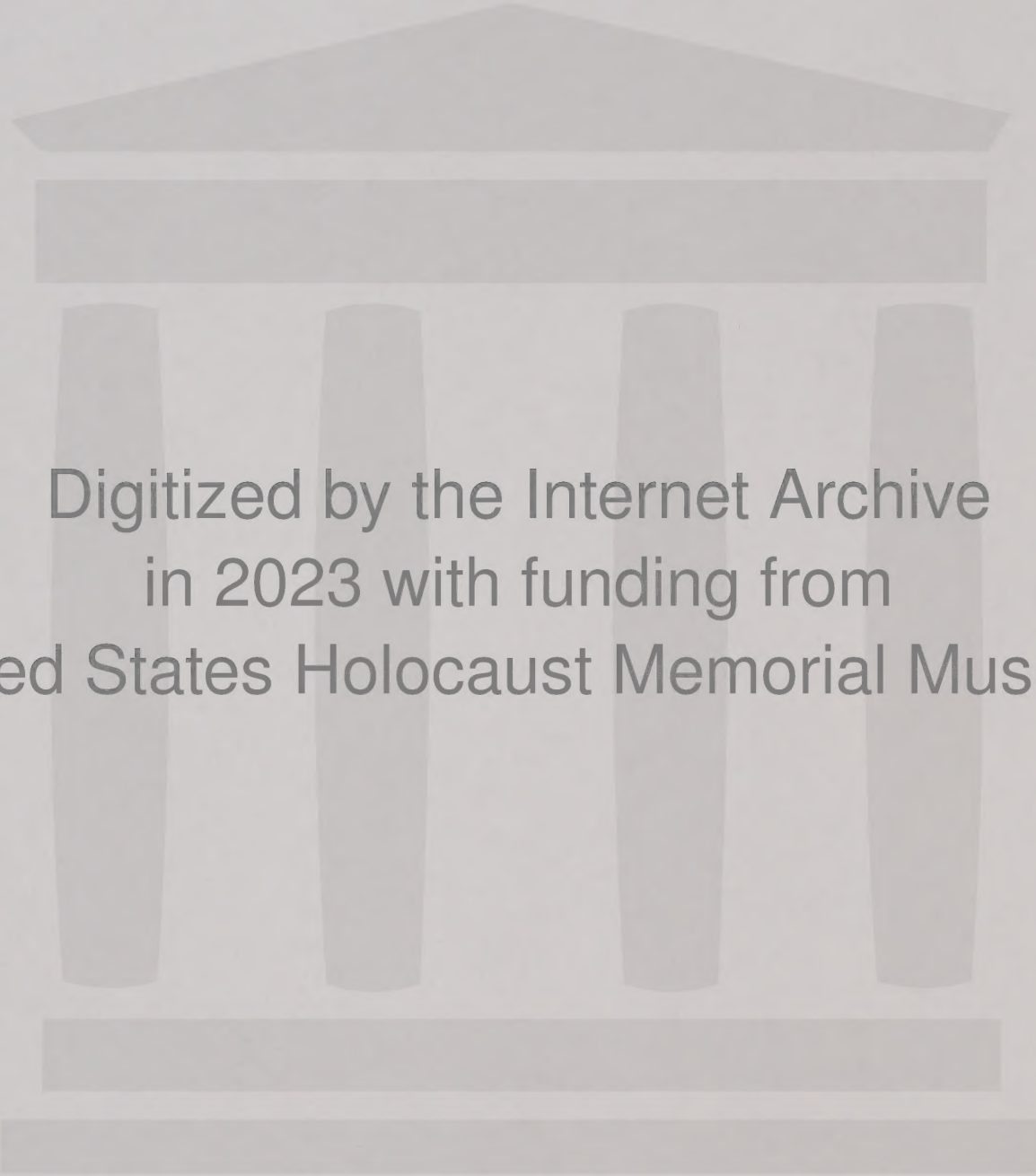


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Against Germany

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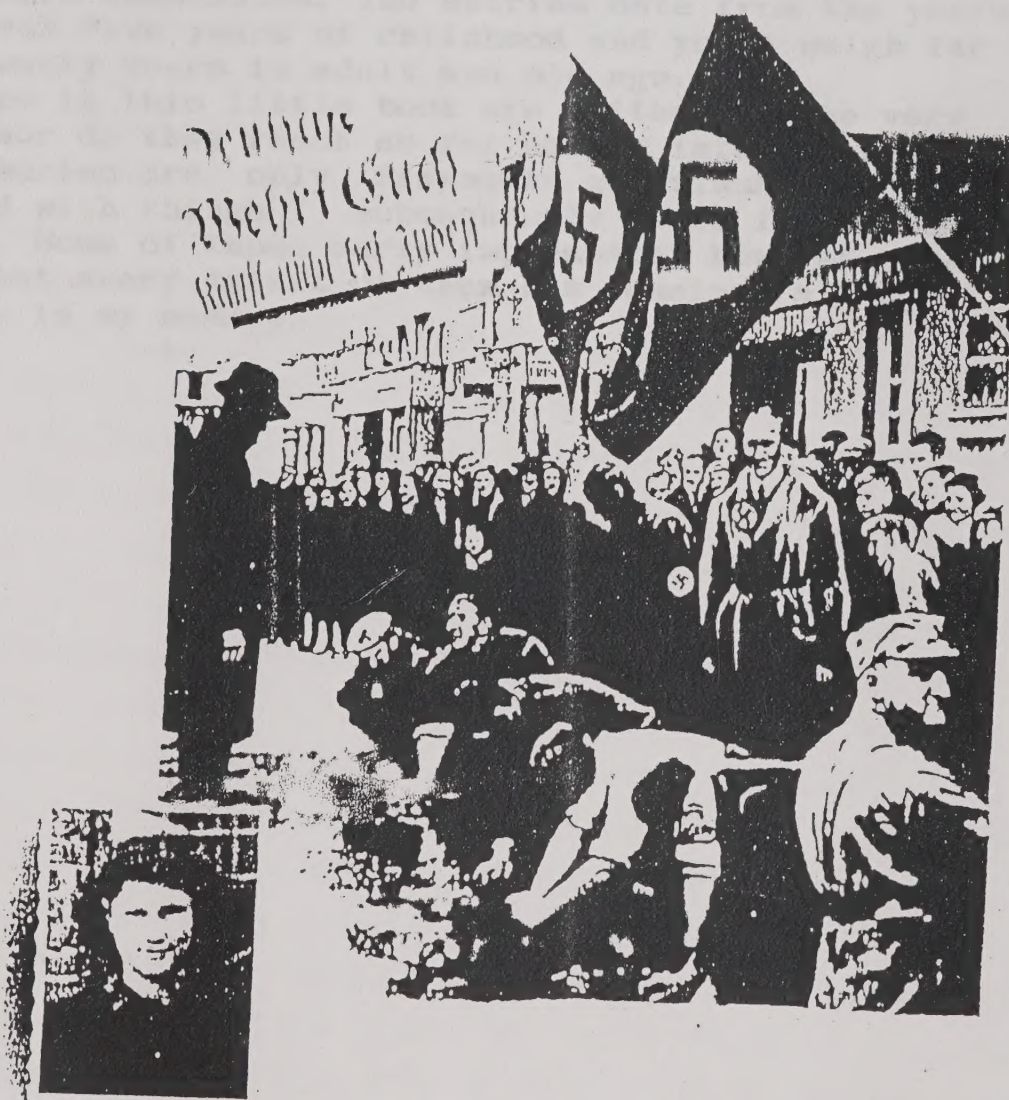
Eva Brück

In the Shadow of the
Swastika

Part I:

A Childhood and Youth

1936-1949



Series:
Unwanted Books about Fascism

AHRIMAN-Verlag



Lerlit[®]
Made in Germany

Nr. 5

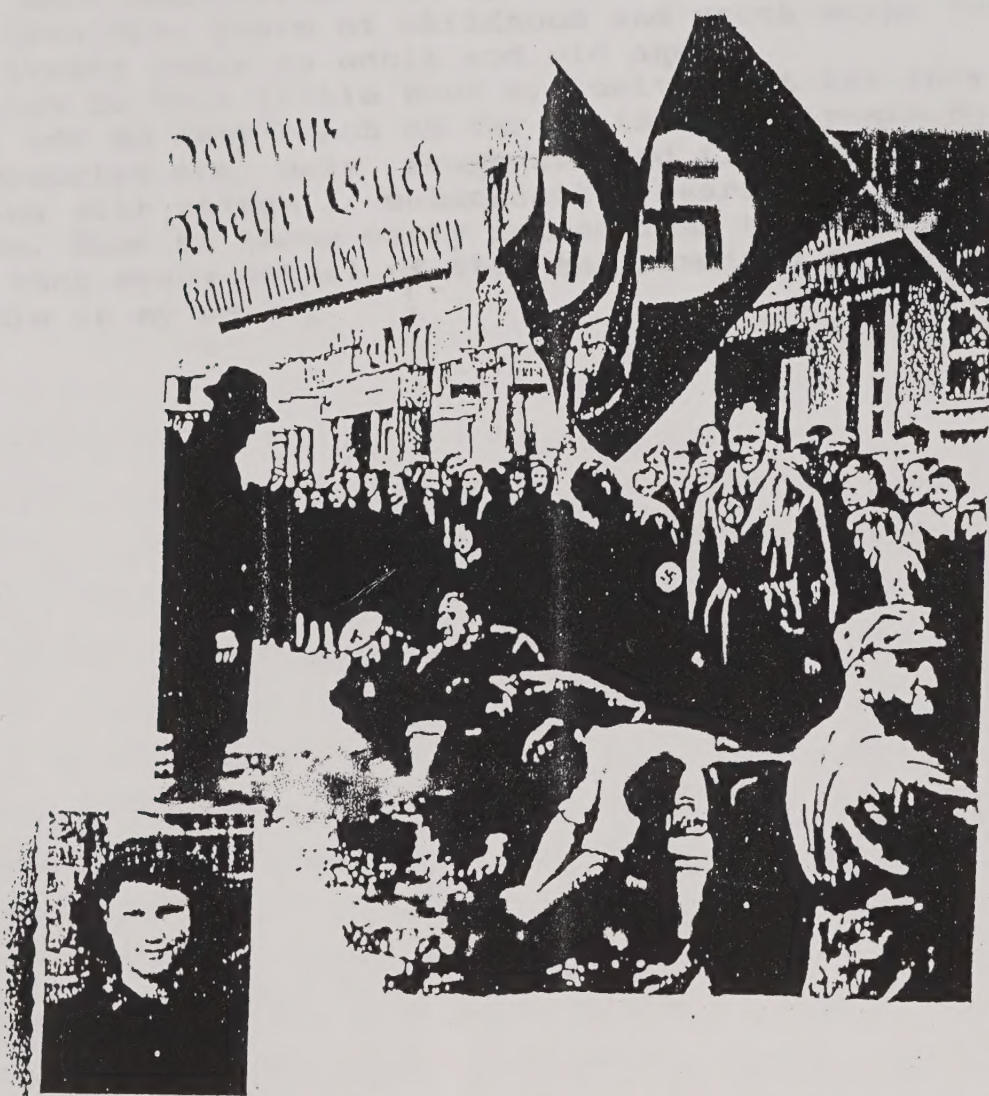
Eva Brück

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Part I:

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Unwanted Books about Fascism

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1.- Berlin, 1926-1933

Whenever my drawers overflow to a point, where I have to sort out things no longer essential, I come across a small red rather shabby book of autographs. Some pages are almost falling out, others are stuck in, taken out of another of its kind, which had been torn, covered with lubricating oil out of a broken bottle and thrown on the floor, together with books, sewing yarn, an ink pot and other objects pulled out of drawers shelves and cupboards by the Nazis during a house search more than half a century ago.

In my school days it was the fashion to have a book of autographs. Each time I look at it I remember all the people who signed their names under words that convey an impression of their personality, recalling the period of my life with which they were associated. The entries date from the years 1938 to 1943. Five years of childhood and youth weigh far more than twenty years in adult and old age.

Yet the dates in this little book are neither at the very beginning, nor do they reach as far as the later years. My earliest memories are only fragments and flashes, supplemented with things I subsequently heard from relatives and friends. Some of those early impressions however, were so striking, that every detail of them has remained alive for me, indelible in my memory.

Berlin, January 1933.

A teeming crowd had collected on the Nollendorfplatz. Men and women of all ages were selling paper flags, others were rattling with tins, shouting words which were drowned in the general noise and bustle.

At the entrance to the tube station a child in a dark blue sailor's coat, with long brown woolen stockings and laced boots was rattling with a tin enveloped by a red paper band, marked with sickle and hammer, yelling: "Vote for List Three, for the Communist Party and the Anti-fascist Action!"

The red-belted tin nearly hit the nose of an elderly worker in a boiler suit, who had just been carried up by the escalator and was shoved forward by the crowd pouring out of the tube station. He saw the little paper flag with sickle and hammer in the button hole of the sailor's coat, smiled and said, with an encouraging wink of his eyes: "Good luck, Comrade!", as he dropped a silver coin into the tin.

That little squirt in the sailor's coat was me, in those days still with fair, short-cut hair. I cannot remember myself with light hair, I only know that this was so from early snapshots and from accounts by people who had known me at that time. I only recall that I was annoyed later on, when my hair was getting darker, about people teasing me, saying that I had forgotten to wash my hair...

A whole Mark, and he called me "Comrade", I thought, and a hot wave of pride rose to my head. Encouraged by this success, I yelled even louder at the top of my voice and I shoved my rattling tin at a red-faced, pot-bellied man with a shining bald head, who emerged from the entrance as he came off the escalator, panting and puffing in the effort of ploughing through the crowd. This time I was not so lucky: "Take that thing away, you little bastard!" the man barked angrily as he roughly pushed me aside.

On the opposite side of the entrance to the tube station an older boy had posted himself, also rattling with a tin and trying to shout me down: "Vote for List One! National Socialist German Workers' Party!" He was wearing a brown shirt and a red arm band with a black Swastika on a circular white

background. His voice was croaky - one moment in a squeaky falsetto and the next instance bleating in a low pitch; his round face was red and moist with perspiration, the veins of his throat were swollen from the effort. When the fat man had pushed me almost into the shopping basket of a voluminous female, the round face of the brown-shirted boy was distorted by a gloating grin. The crowd grew larger with every minute; a noisy tangle of people was gathering around the entrance to the tube-station, shouting, cursing and pushing. "Bloody shit Communists", I heard the hoarse voice of a sweaty-smelling man near me, "they shouldn't bother to lock them up - hanging or shooting is what they deserve, those red buggers!" The voice belonged to a male with a bull-neck and a ruddy, coarse face distorted with hatred. Then a woman's voice was screeching and people around started pushing and scuffling. I began to feel frightened, looked around for my father and his friend, nicknamed "Long Erich", who wore a black bandage over one eye, and shrieked desperately: "Vote for List Three - anti-fascist action!" - rattling with my tin into which other coins had been dropped.

At last! There they were, emerging from the bustle of heads and bodies...with a swing I was in safety, riding on my father's shoulders, high above the seething mass on the square. My father was of medium height, slender, agile and alert. In critical moments he would wrinkle his high forehead, raise his eyebrows, recalling the picture of Mephistopheles in a book of fairy tales - but a very kindly "Mephistopheles", with a mischievous smile in his large, dark eyes. I never saw him in a bad mood; even in the hardest times he never lost his humour and optimism. Perched high above the world, up on his shoulders, I had the secure feeling that nothing on earth could do me any harm.

At home after adventures of this kind, there were always violent controversies between my parents. "How could you drag a child along to such things!" my mother used to say; "Where's your sense of responsibility? And - do you ever think about my feelings? You want to change the world - but you don't seem to care two hoots about what happens to your family..."

"Politics, my dear, don't spare children. The sooner they know what's going on, the better they'll be prepared for a hard life", my father would reply, trying to calm my mother.

She would shake her head and say with a sigh of resignation: "I don't think you'll ever grow up!"

At that point I knew that the two had made up. But when my mother said to father that he would "never grow up", I was moved by warm solidarity with him. Surely he was grown up! He would listen and reply with endless patience to all my questions; he could explain everything in words easy to understand. And yet he was scolded just as I was.

In my eyes there was nothing he could not do; above all he could tell stories and read aloud. No need to go to the theatre - when he told us a story or read to us, he would populate the room with the characters and events involved, he even spoke with different voices: in a high-pitched voice which was very funny and made me laugh even if I was ill and in pain, or in a deep bass voice.

The numerous books which he read to us fascinated me, so that I was motivated to learn to read at a very early age. The walls of my father's study were panelled with books up to the ceiling. I had free access to them - provided that I washed my hands before taking one from the shelves, and that I made no dog-ears in the pages. A book, so I was instructed even before I could read myself, is like a friend who must be treated with respect and affection. It tells you about people, countries and animals you might otherwise never come across. "Even somebody who gets about a great deal in his lifetime, knowing many people and having a wide variety of experiences could never know everything; above all things which happened before he was born could be brought to life by books. They can bring the whole world into your drawing room - the past, the present, other countries, other people..."

I often remembered these words later on in my life, especially when television emerged and pushed the theatre, the cinema and books into the background. True enough, it brings the living, moving world into your drawing room - even in colours; but only in accordance with the idea of the

respective producer of the programme. A book allows its readers complete freedom of imagination; it cannot be replaced by anything...

[My parents were very different in their nature. Maybe that was why they made such a good match.]

Sometimes I woke up in the silence of the night, everybody had gone to bed long ago, only my father still had a light on: he would read, take notes and try to find out answers to many questions. All his life he had been anxious to learn, to collect more knowledge. He shunned no efforts or struggles to assert his ideas in the field of educational therapy and to materialise his high humanist ideals. In those days, of course, I could only feel instinctively, without really understanding what all the numerous discussions were about, which my parents had with people whom the adults addressed as "Herr Doktor" or "Herr Professor". Many of them were arrogant or even vicious towards my father, who was passionate, sometimes vehement, but never insolent or conceited in his dealings with other people. He was ready for every sacrifice to help others - even if we were very short of money, he often treated free of charge handicapped children of poor parents who had turned to him in despair.

This was frequently the subject of arguments between my parents. They also had arguments in the morning, when my father would calmly have left for work wearing one green and one red sock if my mother, always the practical support of our family, had not cared for order and neatness and all the practical daily requirements.

Always elegant in her appearance and posture, surrounded by a pleasant, fresh fragrance, my mother was a lady in every situation - even amidst tumult and horror. When the tension of a critical moment was gone, she could sometimes react by a nervous collapse. Whereas in the face of danger she could master the situation with calm determination, inspiring respect and confidence by her courage and self-control, she could run a mile when frightened by a mouse.

I remember how once, coming home from school, I saw her standing on a chair, stiff with fear, staring at a little grey

mouse in the corner of our kitchen, which disappeared when I turned up and broke the spell. My mother descended in dignity from the chair and welcomed me cheerfully, as though nothing had happened...

In my childhood I found her elegance dreadful; I was particularly indignant because she always expected me to be well behaved -not to use rude expressions, to look neat and tidy - and "ladylike"... Basically her demands were not excessively great - but the fact is that these things were not to my liking. The disdain which my father displayed in regard to such earthly banalities as dish-washing, dusting, tidying up etc. -irksome disturbances in studies, learning, reading, listening to music - corresponded more to my taste.

Up to the end of her life my mother deeply regretted that all her endeavours to make a "lady" of me had failed. My brother inherited her distinguished nature and refined posture. As far as I was concerned, all our numerous relations were unanimous in establishing that I had the character of my paternal grandfather...unfortunately - for he had been... a real Serbian Gypsy. (My mother preferred not to mention this fact). I learned about it years later.

[Up to my seventh year we lived in Berlin. Asked about my address, I replied in one word:

"BerlinSteglitzFeuerbachstrasse15renumbered61".

These words - that concept- symbolised for me everything familiar, everything associated with "home". As a little girl, I cried with fear and dreaded the sessions at the hairdressers at the establishment of a man I knew as "Herr Göhrke", who had his shop in the Bismarckstrasse, not far from our house. When he dried my hair, the noise of the fan reminded me of the drone of aeroplanes which I feared and called "Moon-buzzers".

Very soon, however, I was confronted with very real phenomena which frightened not only children, and then I had a different stock reply to any questions concerning my private life.

My mother had good reason to explain to my small brother and myself that we should be very cautious and mistrusting in regard to strangers, that we should never tell them anything.

"Many people who are very evil pretend to be nice to children, ask them questions about their family - and then their fathers and mothers are sent to prison, where they have a very bad time and sometimes they never come back...Therefore, if a stranger should ask you where you live and other things about our family and friends, you only say one thing: "MY NAME IS RABBIT, I KNOW NOTHING". Only that; not one word more, do you understand? Even if the stranger seems ever so kind!!"

My mother warned me above all against people in uniform. These warnings of early childhood, substantiated by experiences which justified them, penetrated to the marrow of my bones - leading to reactions much later in life, which might have appeared to be excessive or unwarranted...

By the time my brother and I were born in Berlin, my father, Milan Morgenstern, had made a name for himself as a psychiatrist and therapeutic instructor of handicapped children. Well known child specialists such as Professor Czerny and Professor Hallauer of the Charité sent him patients; his name was known in many countries, and parents of handicapped children came from all directions to consult him. I clearly remember a fair-haired little girl called Irmelin from Norway, and a wild dark haired, dark eyed boy from Sao Paulo in Brazil, Marcello Salles, and his father, who had a walking stick, gloves and a straw hat - like the "rich uncle from America" featuring in many films of that time...

We lived in a solid apartment house with a grey façade, built around the turn of the century, in a three room flat, with a sunny balcony, a tiny "maid's room" in the large kitchen, running hot water, central heating and a bathroom, often blocked for hours by my father, who used it as a dark-room for developing his films (he was an outstanding photographer, and my brother still uses his "leica" camera today).

In those days - on the eve of the accession of Hitler to power - the situation in Berlin was anything but rosy. My mother's warnings were not unfounded: even small children were often involved in the political struggles and intrigues of the time.

The streets of the city, playgrounds, parks and backyards were teeming with hired snoopers and informers.

One day when I was playing ball outside our house. I noticed a strange man who was constantly watching me for some reason. He made me feel awkward and frightened, I took my ball and ran around the corner to shake him off - but he soon reappeared. "Why are you running away? Here - take a sweet! I know your daddy very well....where is he now?"

The oily voice of the man, his unnatural, condescending manner made me feel uncanny and frightened .

"MY NAME IS RABBIT AND I KNOW NOTHING", I blurted at him , turned and ran home. Full of excitement I reported the incident to my mother, who listened with a very serious and worried face. I felt pride and pleasure when she said I had done well not to go along with the strange man.

Nearly every day we witnessed clashes between "Reds" and "Brownshirts" in the streets, and we children all sided with one of those groups; hardly anyone was neutral: we were not excluded from the conflicts of the adults. Many times I heard from children I played with in the street , that their father, brother or uncle had been arrested, beaten up or denounced. I heard other children say that they had also been approached by strange "uncles" who had offered them sweets or chocolate and tried, with artificial friendliness, to obtain information about their families and friends.

During a walk with my father on a cold and rainy day we once came across a long queue of men and women waiting outside a building. When we returned, we passed them again, they were still standing there. "They are looking for work", said my father, "every morning they go out early to queue up in the hope of getting a job. Without work you can't earn money - and you can't live without money."

I had my first experience which taught me that you could not

buy anything without money during a school excursion. Shortly before the Reichstag fire I started my school days at the so-called "Secular School" in Berlin-Schöneberg. Most of the teachers there were Social Democrats or Communists, and, as the name of the school indicates, Scripture lessons were not in the curriculum.

On the school excursion in question our teacher, Herr Walther, had gone ahead with some of the pupils, while others were crowding around a man selling ice-cream lollies. I elbowed my way up to the man and took an ice-cream lolly from his tray. As I turned to go, I heard the stern voice of the vendor: "And what about the money?"

I had no money. I simply forgot about that part of the transaction. Of course I knew in principle that taking things without paying was "pinching". That was not my intention. I had just stretched out my hand like all the others when the man had distributed the lollipops with friendly words. The others obviously had money to pay, I didn't - and suddenly I became aware of my situation, I felt dreadfully ashamed and began to cry. Herr Walther, noticing that something was wrong, hastened to the spot, paid the man and said to me: "You must never forget that nothing, nothing at all in life is a free gift! Everything has its price, and you have to pay it..."

The mass of unemployed in the early Thirties included many women and girls, who were looking for employment as housemaids.

In Berlin we always had a maid: there was a Minna, a Marie, Martha and Erna. They changed quite often. Every time one of them left there were days when our corridor was like the waiting room of the labour exchange. The applicant selected by my mother moved into the "maid's room" next to the kitchen - more like a storage cupboard than a bedroom, so tiny that one could hardly turn round in it. And then she had to undergo a "special course", in which my father inaugurated her to the secrets of Viennese cooking - with the aid of plasticine, to shape noodles and various kinds of dumplings.

While my father was with his patients we were strictly forbidden to make any noise. At those times my brother and I

were happy to go for walks with the maid on the Lauenburger Platz or the Stadtpark, where I picked little bright red rowanberries which we called "Japanese Cherries" for my dolls' kitchen. On sunny days in the spring and summer my mother pulled the two of us in a squeaky wheelbarrow to the Kauschstrasse, where we had rented a little garden with a wooden shed in an allotment area. The shed was "guarded" by "Herr Richter" - a life-size doll which my mother had skilfully made out of old newspapers and rags, with a painted face and a long impressive nose. "Herr Richter" was dressed in a discarded suit and old shoes of my father. Perched on a garden chair in the shed, he gave the impression from afar as though a man of flesh and blood was on guard there. My mother often said with pride, that there were burglaries all around, but not in our garden - because of "Herr Richter".....

We played in the garden or in the street with children of the neighbourhood, and we squealed with delight in the evening, when we were washed under the pump and then pulled home in the rickety wheelbarrow. Twittering birds soared in the mild evening air, insects buzzed over our heads as we jolted over the cobblestones. The churchbell of the Nathanaelkirche struck six times. The golden evening sun lit up a sea of black-white and red and swastika flags fluttering in the wind at the windows of the new blocks of flats lining the Kauschstrasse; my father cursed the "reactionary officials" inhabiting many of the four-storey apartment houses there. It was good to come home on such days, hungry and tired from moving about in the open air, and to be met by the appetizing smell of supper awaiting us as my mother opened the door to our flat.

On rainy days we used to play in the nursery while my father was working in the drawing room. Because of the wallpaper with golden flowers on a blue background in the nursery, that room had been named "Golden Room" by my mother. Its windows overlooked a carefully kept courtyard with ornamental fruit trees. I knew that courtyard in every detail, including the

voices of the housewives and maid-servants who used to beat their carpets there, empty their rubbish bins and gossip. I recognised many of them by the sound of their footsteps. In mild spring and summer nights I enjoyed creeping out of bed after my mother had turned off the light, to climb onto the window-sill, staring intensely into the darkness in an attempt to discover the secrets it concealed, imagining that ghosts were haunting the silence of the night - like in the fairy tales which our parents used to read to us before we went to sleep. Once an owl came quite close to the window, disappeared in the foliage of a tree, and began to hoot its eery song... My mother had a special name for everything, a fitting song, verse or saying for every situation. Just as she had named our nursery the "Golden Room", our drawing room, where my father gave his lessons and which we also used as our dining room, was called the "Herrenzimmer" (smoking room). These names call to mind the familiar atmosphere of those rooms. The "Smoking Room" had a balcony overlooking the quiet, respectable Feuerbachstrasse, with its solid, grey apartment houses. On our side of the street, a few houses further on in the direction of the Bismarckstrasse, a busy traffic road, there was the grocer's shop belonging to Frau Klawitter, a kindhearted, rotund, noisy chatterbox, with a large portion of the typical coarse Berlin humour. In the warm season she also had a stand on the corner of the street. In a hoarse voice the little woman with the cheerful face would loudly advertise her goods. I was fascinated by her performance, in particular when she blew up her fat, ruddy cheeks, looking very much like the apples she was offering for sale, trumpeting at passers by with so much zeal that the veins in her throat would stand out. A lady visiting my mother one day asked me what I wanted to be when I was grown up.

"A market-crier, like Frau Klawitter!" was my reply..

In the summer the "ice cream man" could frequently heard, ringing his bell and attracting all the children of the neighbourhood to his little van. The children crowded around him, and, after he had lifted off the silvery shining hoods from the ice cream containers, he used to scrape the ice cream

out with a wooden spoon, spread it on to a wafer placed within a metal holder, cover it with another wafer, push the finished product out of the mold and hand it to the little customers, who placed their coins on a saucer - a fascinating procedure which I enjoyed watching very carefully. The ice cream had such a sweet and appetizing aroma, that it made my mouth water. I would have loved to buy a wafer myself - but that was strictly forbidden: my mother said that ice cream from the van was not always good for us, it might make us feel sick. So we bought our ice cream in a shop round the corner, in the Körnerstrasse.

On some days I saw a horse-drawn cart in our street, from which men with leather hoods over their heads and shoulders, wearing thick mittens, hauled large blocks of ice from the cart with a long stick capped by a bent iron hook at one end and carried the ice blocks into houses and shops; there were no electric refrigerators in those days, only ice boxes to keep things cool. If I happened to play nearby, I rushed to the spot, together with other children, and we picked up small bits of ice from the ground and sucked them. I took good care my mother did not catch me in this occupation, rather more dubious from the hygienic point of view than ice cream bought off a van..

I also loved standing on the balcony, watching what was going on in the street. Sometimes, in the dusk, when the lights in the street went on, I had a feeling as though mysterious shadows were haunting the dark spaces and corners where the light did not penetrate, I looked intensely to the opposite side, trying to peer into the rooms behind the windows as they lit up, and to imagine what was going on there-something I still like to do, walking along a street after dark...

I stayed there until I began to feel cold and then hastened back into the warm, light "smoking room", where I dived into one of the large, comfortable arm chairs to read a book, or I followed my mother's call to come and have supper, enjoying the security of our home and my family.

One day I discovered an illustrated volume entitled "Moscow" on the bookshelves of the "smoking room". It contained numerous photos of that city and its inhabitants. One of them showed a little boy standing in the snow, in a threadbare coat much too large for him, in worn boots and a ragged fur cap - also of dimensions for a large adult man. The boy was a bundle of skin and bones - but he was posted there, legs apart, self confident, full of enterprise, with a broad carefree smile lighting up his face, against the misty background of the outlines of the Kremlin towers with stars on top of the steeple.

My father looked over my shoulder as I was contemplating the picture, and commented: "Just look at this little chap - filthy, hungry, freezing in those worn-out rags - but grinning from ear to ear! Almost as though he knew that those stars up on the towers were saying that he would soon be better off...just as the swastikas around here are warning us against bad things to come..."

In our "smoking room" my father's friends, who addressed each other as "Comrade" would often gather to talk for hours. Among them were musicians, actors, artists and doctors, teachers, lawyers...I still remember some names and the faces belonging to the names: Stefan and Willy Wolpe, a musician and an artist; Jascha Horenstein, the conductor; Erwin Faber and Grete Jacobsen, both actors, and Grete's sister Hansi; Konny Linz, a teacher. With some of them the friendship lasted up to date, or until their death. On many evenings they sat in our drawing room, enveloped by bluish clouds of smoke, or they gathered in the flat of the pianists Franz and Tamara Osborn, who lived in the artists' colony on the Breitenbachplatz. I often accompanied my father, riding on his shoulders, or hopping along beside him. This flat impressed me, above all because of the large, shining black grand piano,

which occupied a considerable portion of the space, and because of the strip-lighting called "soffit-lamps", looking like the modern fluorescent tubes, above a wide, cosy corner-couch, casting a mild light into the attic room with a slanted ceiling.

There were animated discussions, one cigarette was lit after another, there was music, reciting of poetry and prose. I was perched on the couch beside my father, or on a large soft cushion on the carpet, listening to their words with enraptured reverence and observing their faces. They were agitated, with lively, changing expressions; temperamental gestures; very different in appearance and manner of speaking; some cheerful and humorous, others serious and thoughtful, or sad and depressed. Yet they all had something which I would not have been able to explain or define if anybody had asked me - it was simply that I felt they were reliable, good and strong; they seemed to be "illuminated from within", inspired by a great passion. I was happy to be in their midst, to feel that I belonged to them - that WE belonged to them, my father and I.]

I did not, of course, understand many words and terms which constantly recurred in their conversations, but somehow I grasped their meaning in the context of their talk, which deeply impressed me and which gradually grew into a world concept in the course of the years, with bit by bit added as in a puzzle. They talked about "Sozis" and "Nazis"; "Communists" and "Reichstag elections"; "Comrades" who had been "arrested", "released" or "taken out of the country"; time and again there were references to the "Reichstag Trial", "Dimitroff", "Thälmann" and "Hitler"; I noted the words "Nazi Bastards" and "Bourgeoisie", "Opportunists" and "Trotskyites".

However busy my father was - he always found time to listen to me with great patience and to give intelligible answers to my endless questions. And so the first fundamental concepts of my "philosophy" arose in my mind. In the first place I saw mankind as composed of "Communists" (symbolic for good, positive), "Nazis" (the synonym for evil and negative) - and a kind of "mixture": people who could not make up their minds

and who were basically cowards. The last group above all included the "Social Democrats", those "unorganised in any party", the "religious" and the "Bourgeoisie" - the latter associated in my imagination with "narrow-minded philistines" and "elegant arrogance", who always grumbled- especially at children -and who never said what they really thought, so that one had to consider them with caution. These "philosophical principles" were coupled with certain basic rules of conduct repeatedly imprinted on my mind: "Don't speak so loudly! You never know who is listening!" - "Be careful what you say on the telephone!" - "Don't write everything in letters sent by post!" - "Don't write down things that might be read by others and possibly be used against you!"

Warnings issued by people whom I trusted and respected; warnings that penetrated into the marrow of my bones.

Unconsciously they influenced modes of behaviour, reactions to the environment and human relations throughout the whole of my life.

The worst sort of human individual in my eyes at that time - and up to this day - was and is the "tell-tale" among children and the informer among adults. Listening to the conversations between the friends of my family gathered in our "smoking room", at the Osborns and elsewhere, I concluded that the term "Trotskyite" denoted just that sort of person - although I could not really imagine anything concretely definable under that label. I only noticed that it was always used in connection with people who had "betrayed Communists" -why, how, what for I had no idea; but since "Communists" in my eyes were in a way "heroes without blemish", anyone guilty of betraying them must have been evil.

Among the numerous poems read or recited to us in my childhood and youth, there was also the poem by Heine, containing the words:

"Der schlimmste Mann im ganzen Land
Das ist und bleibt der Denunziant". (1)

I can never forget these words.

Life changes in the course of the years; yet attitudes motivating modes of behaviour in adult life may well be rooted

in very early experiences.

Perhaps that is why I have always found it hard to accept emotionally that even the best sort of people have weaknesses, and that there is some good even in the worst sort - even if I am intellectually quite aware that this is a fact of life...

One day my mother's sister, our "auntie Lotte" took my brother and myself out for a walk. We passed an advertising column with a large portrait of Hitler stuck above an election slogan. My brother - a chubby little boy with black hair and dark eyes in a white fur coat, made a serious face and pointed with his finger to the poster and squeaked: "That is our enemy!"

Auntie Lotte became rather nervous when people began to cast menacing glances in our direction and hastily pulled us away, loudly saying, with an emphatic display of apparent cheerfulness: "I'm sure you would like to hear the story about the Little Coffee Bean, wouldn't you? Come along then..."

My parents had gone to their Russian lesson on that day; they had started learning that language from a small, lively Russian woman whom we all called "Tovarishch Kharon". My father had met her in the course of his work for an organisation called "Workers' International Mutual Aid Association", on behalf of which he held consultations at a social welfare centre in Wedding, a working class area in the north-west of Berlin. He helped to care for children and juveniles whose parents were in prison or persecuted for political reasons, and who had become involved in conflicts with the law. The little Russian woman was a post-graduate in educational science and she had come to Berlin to complete her thesis. She tried to convince my parents that it would be best for them to go to Moscow with her in the face of the growing danger of Hitler and the Nazis coming to power; my father's skills would be urgently needed there.

I had overheard several talks in our "smoking room" on that subject in those days, and to me the idea of moving to Moscow - in my eyes a kind of "Mecca", where the "good ones" were mightier than the "bad ones", and where we would not have to be afraid of Nazis - was exciting and fascinating, but my mother

would not hear of it: "Even if you think I'm a bourgeois coward", she said, "I just couldn't live with my family in one room partitioned by a curtain and shared with strangers!" When "Tovarishch Kharon" finally returned to Moscow, my parents took her to the station. The maid had her free day and was out. We stayed at home by ourselves and I was charged to take care of my little brother.

It was getting dark outside and the rain was pelting against the window pane. An almost ominous silence reigned in the flat. Beside the sliding door leading from my parents' bedroom to the "smoking room" was a "Singer" sewing machine, to the right of it a window overlooking the Feuerbachstrasse. We huddled into a big soft chair, over which a reproduction of the "Mother and Sick Child" by Vermeer hung on the wall between the two windows of the room. The light of a street lamp was reflected in the yellow polished wood surface of a chest of drawers, framed in a dark brown edge beside the chair, just next to the second window, and the lower part of the back wall of the room was concealed behind two wide beds moved together, each with a bedside table covered with a stack of books, and two small reading lamps above the head ends. The chest of drawers, the "Singer" sewing machine and the Vermeer accompanied us on all our ways in my childhood and youth. In the semi-darkness all the objects around looked like lurking phantoms. Suddenly a hoarse cry of pain was carried up from the street - unnatural and distorted, hardly like a human voice; Seconds later I saw through the windows blurred by raindrops the outlines of a tarpaulin covered truck outside the neighbouring house. Two men in the brown SA uniform were dragging a man with torn clothes and dishevelled hair out of the house and pushing him into the truck, which immediately disappeared in the dark, with screeching wheels. Then everything was again shrouded in ghostly silence. I was stiff with horror. My little brother continued unperturbed to run his little fingers along the side of the chair, drowsily muttering something to himself.

I was suddenly overcome with the urge to protect him - he was still such a little boy, and I was responsible for him. When I

laid my arm around him, he looked at me in surprise with his round dark eyes, since he was used to rough treatment by his older sister, and was content merely to be left in peace... Then I began to sing at the top of my voice a song which my parents had learned in their Russian lessons, and which my mother had taught us - about a girl called Dunya and a Commissar...

At that moment I heard the key turn in the door; my mother came running into the room, calling: "For goodness' sake, child! You mustn't sing that so loudly!" She went on scolding for a while, but I was so relieved that my parents had come home that her words were music in my ears...

Not long after that episode the Nazis came in the night to search our flat.

I was torn out of the depth of sleep; I thought I was still dreaming. Our room was a scene of wild chaos. Everything was scattered over the floor - linen, books, toys. Strange men in SA and SS uniforms were barking crudely at my mother, who was standing in the middle of the room in her nightdress, with dishevelled hair, with my sleepy, crying brother on her arm.. A young man in the brown SA uniform held a smoking gun in his hand and said: "We've just bumped off one red bastard..now we've come for the next one..."

With a fright I was immediately wide awake. Suddenly I remembered the awful cry I had heard on the evening of the departure of "Tovarishch Kharon". I looked around in the devastated "Golden Room" and almost cried out with horror: behind a blue curtain at the foot end of my bed, which concealed dressing gowns and a laundry bag I saw - my father -pale and motionless like a wax figure. I was struck with terror; another moment and they would tear away the curtain and....

Noise from the street - rough bawling and cries like the one I had heard that night interrupted my thoughts. And then - as though by a miracle, the Nazis had disappeared, as suddenly as they had turned up. For a few moments we all remained

motionless in fear, waiting whether they would come back.

They did not come back that night.

Before dawn of the next morning my father was taken by his comrades across the German frontier.

My brother and I were strictly ordered not to reply to any question by other people about my father and the family except by the words: "MY NAME IS RABBIT I KNOW NOTHING!"

"Say only that - not a word more, do you hear? No matter what happens or who should ask -even if the auntie or uncle is ever so nice, gives you sweets makes promises..."

My brother and I were taken to Auntie Lotte for a time. Her husband, Uncle Fritz, then still "magnanimously allowed" his wife to receive her Jewish relations. He was told that my mother was ill. My mother had warned us also against uncle Fritz; with justification, as it soon became evident- because "dear Uncle Fritz" very quickly turned out to be a staunch Nazi. Not long after Hitler came to power he divorced his Jewish wife and chased her and their little son out into the street without a penny. After a long ordeal they were able to emigrate thanks to the help of my mother.

While we were staying with my aunt, my mother and our faithful maid Martha packed all our things, sent off boxes of books and some furniture and household accessories, and prepared a damp, lightless basement room in a different area of the city as emergency accommodation.

We never went back to the Feuerbachstrasse.

In times when agitated crowds were raging, howling, beating about, fighting and pushing in the streets; when men in brownshirts and caps with chin-straps, swastika arm bands and black top boots were stampeding in goose-step over the pavement, bellowing marching songs; while growing numbers of men and women were tormented in torture cellars, prisons and penal servitude, on the surface daily life, to begin with, continued to drift on as usual. Women went shopping, men who had jobs left home in the morning and returned at the end of the day. Many who had been out of work for longer periods suddenly managed to find employment. That was why people rather

tended to be for than against Hitler. Children - apart from those who had attended the "red" secular school - went out with their satchels every morning as usual.

Our school was soon closed by the Nazis and many of the teachers were locked up, including our teacher, Herr Walther, as I heard from my parents and friends.

I played ball and spinning top in the street - outside our house, then outside the house of Auntie Lotte and then outside our basement room. I cannot say today what I felt while playing; probably I was only concerned with my ball or spinning top. Children live for the moment: pain, whether great or small, overshadows their life only as long as it lasts.

One day, when I was engrossed in playing outside our basement, I saw how a bigger boy kept on molesting two children of my own age, a boy and a girl who were peacefully playing. He took away their ball, kicked them about with vile abuses, calling them "Jewish shit" and "Jewish swine", and when they withdrew into a corner to play with marbles he trampled the little girl on her hand with his nailed boot. She cried out with pain, the little boy was so frightened that he stood there, stiff and defenceless. I tied a sharp stone which I found under a tree into the whip of my spinning top, crept up to the big, fat brute from behind and, when he turned round, I lashed out at him, quick as lightening, hitting right into his ugly, wobbly face, distorted by a vicious smirk. The attack came unexpectedly. He yelled and cursed - and ran away. The two little children - brother and sister - looked at me with frightened eyes. The little girl said: "Let's go away from here, quickly!"

We had hardly picked up our things, when a gang of Hitler Youths appeared, with a large German sheep dog. They threw the two little ones to the ground, kicked them and battered them about. Before I could turn round, the large dog had jumped on me and tugged at my clothes, snarling ferociously. I shrieked with fear and pain which only angered the dog even more, it howled and snarled and bit me into my arms, legs and face. I felt its hot breath - and even today, decades later, I still

have occasional nightmares, seeing its bloodthirsty eyes and bared teeth over me...

I would have been torn to pieces if a courageous man had not come to my rescue at the last moment, tearing away the raging beast.

Covered with blood, howling with pain, I ran home. One of my father's friends had come to see my mother; it was he who had found our emergency accommodation for us. He told her, that my father was safe outside the country; that man had found our emergency accommodation for us.

My mother was horrified when I entered the room. She and our faithful maid Martha cleaned up my wounds, and took me to our family doctor, Dr. Erich Nassau. I liked our doctor and felt secure in his presence, he always joked and cheered us up. This time, however, he was very serious. He listened to my account of what had happened, shook his head, gave me an injection and said to my mother: "You can't stay where you are. And it was risky to come here, my patients are carefully scrutinised these days..."

Once again we had to move. This time into an even worse dungeon in a strange environment, where nobody knew us and we knew nobody. My mother managed to conjure some homely comfort even into this dreary place. With a few orange crates, covered with brightly coloured oil cloth, a bunch of flowers in an empty bottling jar fished out of a rubbish bin, carefully rinsed and painted with cheerful colours, an old blanket cut up and transformed into a curtain- the room had an almost homely atmosphere.

I had not been able to go to school for some time; the "Secular School" had ceased to exist, and we had, so to speak, "gone underground". For all the world we had disappeared.

I missed school, I missed the other children, there were hardly any books, and I was not allowed to play outside in the street. Mostly I sat on my bed and played on my mouth organ - or I teased my little brother.

March 6th was my mother's birthday. Martha, who refused to abandon my mother, even if there was no money for regular payment of her services, helped us prepare a bouquet of paper

flowers, she baked an appetizing cake out of the modest ingredients sent to her by an aunt who lived in the country - to the address of her brother, where she was officially living. She also taught us a "birthday poem":

"Heut' vor sechsunddreissig Jahren
kamst du durch die Luft gefahren.
Machtest Bett und Windeln nass -
Liebe Mama -tust du heut' noch das?" (1)

When my brother and I, still in our pyjamas, handed our presents to her in the morning of her birthday and ,amidst giggles and squeals, recited our "poem", my mother was so touched, that she took us in her arms and wept...

And then, one day I was so sick of spending my days in the dark dungeon when the sun was shining outside, that I slipped out into the street and played with my ball, without any particular thoughts -when suddenly I heard screeching brakes close to me. Before I knew what was happening, I was squeezed in on the back seat of a car, between two strange men in leather coats, their hats drawn almost over their eyes. Generally a car drive was exciting and pleasant. But this time it was uncanny and I was stunned with fear. After a longer drive the car stopped outside a tall brick building. The strange men took me across a long passage, then up some stairs, into a room with no furniture except a heavy desk and a few chairs. Then a man came in, wearing a white overall, who looked like a doctor. He looked at me with a piercing glance, like a wild beast looks at its prey, and unpacked some instruments out of a bag. I was terribly frightened, but was unable to cry or shout, nor resist. There was only one thing I had in mind all the time: "MY NAME IS RABBIT I KNOW NOTHING". That was all these people got out of me: despite apparent kindness at first; despite painful blows later; despite vile abuses and threats and despite horrible "investigations" during which I was tied to a high chair, the purpose of which I could not understand.

I cannot remember what actually happened. I only know that my

legs were pulled apart by beasts with angry faces, that I closed my eyes and felt great pain and I heard them say, again and again that I should at last stop that nonsense and answer their questions, or it would hurt even more.

Since that time I am overcome by uncontrollable fear every time I have to go to a gynecologist...

I have no idea how long I was kept in that room. I only remember that I was suddenly sitting on the cold, damp pavement of an unknown street, leaning against a wall, without

underpants, without shoes or stockings, with my coat torn, a bleeding nose and my left eye so swollen that I could hardly open it. I tried to get up and walk, but walking was no less painful than sitting and wherever I put my hand, I was full of sticky blood. I felt dizzy and I did not know what to do. I did not even know the name of the street where we were living at that time. I crept into a house entrance, where it was not quite as cold as in the street, where it was windy, wet and getting dark. Then I must have fallen asleep with exhaustion, as I was suddenly aware of a strange woman standing over me, asking what was wrong and to whom I belonged. "To...to Frau Klawitter" I sobbed, as though I was melting at the sound of a friendly human voice, evidently genuinely concerned and willing to help me.

"...at the grocer's shop in the Feuerbachstrasse in Steglitz... MY NAME IS RABBIT I KNOW NOTHING..."

The strange woman had a kind heart. She took me to Frau Klawitter. When we arrived there, it was late at night. Frau Klawitter came to the door in her nightdress. She looked at me and threw up her hands in dismay. "My god, my god," she exclaimed, thanked the strange woman and took me into her large, soft, sweating arms.

The strange woman wanted to explain where and how she had found me, but Frau Klawitter only thanked her once more and then hastily pulled me inside the flat, as though I really belonged to her. My mother had been her customer for years, and evidently it had got around what happened to us that night, and that we had since disappeared. "MY NAME IS RABBIT I KNOW NOTHING!", I kept repeating again and again. "All right, all

right, little girl," said Frau Klawitter and asked no questions. She washed and bandaged me and packed me into a bed already occupied by another little girl who was fast asleep.. I was so exhausted that I must have dropped off immediately. When I woke up, there was Martha, who took me to my mother. At the end of that day we left Berlin- for Vienna, to my father's mother, known to us as "Oma Wien" (Grandma Vienna).

- (i) Thirty-six years ago today
you flew through the air,
wetting bed and nappies -
dear Mummy do you still do that now?

The next station: Vienna (1933-1938)

The five years in Vienna - from April 1933-April 1938 - seem to me like a long and decisive period of my life; almost longer and perhaps no less decisive than the first seven years in Berlin.

I cannot remember in detail how we travelled from Berlin to Vienna. I only retained the scene of our dear, faithful maid Martha, a girl from the country, around twenty years of age, who had stood by my mother with courage and self-sacrifice in those days of hardship, became a reliable friend, and stood on the platform, weeping desperately as our train started rolling away.

Only now I can fully appreciate how hard it must have been for my mother, to travel into the uncertainty of a new life, with two small children and hardly any money, not knowing the whereabouts of her husband, whether he was still at large and alive, or when and if she would see him again, and forced to leave behind so much that she had built up in years of hard work. But my mother was young, full of courage, energy and optimism.

On my desk before me today, as I write these lines, more than half a century after, I have a photo of her, when she was about my present age. She is sitting in a room of her house in Oxford, England - one of the many homes she had made cosy, attractive and comfortable with endless energy and persistence in the course of her eventful life. Her dear face, inspiring confidence and courage always seems to say to me: "Never mind - it's all half as bad as if it were twice as bad!" She radiates vitality, courage and confidence, even years after she found her final resting place.....]

In my childhood and youth I regarded my mother, Sophie Morgenstern, as a matter of course. It is painful today to think that I genuinely appreciated her unusual personality so late in my (and her) life. She was always part of my existence - she was there when I was ill, when I needed help, she cared for the daily needs of our family. She cooked, tidied up, sewed, knitted, mended and washed - and she sang with a beautiful contralto voice the songs of many nations and many composers; above all those by Gustav Mahler, Schubert, Brahms, Schumann and Beethoven. My mother was very many-sided in her talents. She was gracious, danced well and with pleasure; she was a fascinating story-teller and reader; she knew a wide range of books and herself wrote short stories and dramatic texts which made us laugh and cry. Aged 84, a year before her death, my mother won a literary radio contest with a short story about one of the girls she had once worked with. She was full of humour and had a rich imagination, and for every occasion she had a song or a poem at hand.

In addition she was an excellent housewife, a patient nurse and reliable helper to all in need; at times she did too much in her zeal to help, and was exploited as a result.

What could my mother have become, if she had not grown up as a poor orphan - her parents had died of TB when she was a small child. Her sister, Lotte, seven years older, took care of her younger sister and brother as well as she could.

My brother and I loved listening with tense interest when my mother told us "youth stories" about her early years. These hours, when we sat beside her, as she told her stories while she was knitting or mending our clothes, are unforgotten and number among the best and warmest recollections of my childhood. I am convinced that those hours greatly contributed to consolidate the closeness of our family, and the sense of genuine human values within us.

My mother grew up in the care of various "foster mothers", to whom she was entrusted by wealthy relations. Whenever she visited their houses, she felt like the "poor relation", for whom they all felt sorry, but who could not entirely be accepted in "their circles". My mother, who was very sensitive and emotional, suffered a great deal from that position which she regarded as humiliating; she suffered from the feeling of abandonment and loneliness, and from the absence of security and warmth of heart. She suffered from the absence of all the things which she herself could only observe from the threshold.

At the "Pestalozzi-Fröbel House", where she was trained as a pediatric nurse, she made friends whom she retained over decades; and she was the centre holding together the surviving members of our wide branched relations, scattered all over the world, as one large family community - by means of regular correspondence and using every opportunity for mutual visits. She met my father in the course of her work with mentally retarded children, her particular field of interest. She often referred to her marriage as a "New Year's Joke", since their wedding had taken place in a New Year's night; that "Joke" proved to be the corner stone of a happy - even though at times turbulent - marriage, which lasted up to my father's death 35 years later.

[Although she often smiled at the Communist ideas of my father, which she regarded as largely unrealistic and remote from practical life, she always stood firmly by his side. My mother was practical and earth-bound; she felt that human nature could never allow the perfect implementation of high ideals. In a revolution, she considered, more values were destroyed than created, and after each euphoric upsurge following a victory, unscrupulous and selfish power groups, suppressing the majority - regardless under which "noble" pretexts - would again raise their heads sooner or later.

Nevertheless she admired the clean and consistent attitude towards life of my father and his Communist friends, and all her life my mother, without high-falluting phrases, was always staunchly active on the right side, wherever the defence of

justice was at issue.]

My father arose from quite a different background.

His mother, Vilma Richter, (our "Oma Wien"), had been a rising star as a singer at the Vienna opera in her youth. When the prima donna dropped out, she had sometimes been entrusted with leading parts.

Yet namely at that point her fate was sealed; she met my paternal grandfather, the Gypsy Stefan Bozhareff.

Aged yellowed photos which I saw of him showed a stately man of exotically attractive looks, with marked, sharp features and fiery large dark eyes. He roused my interest and sympathy, and from the numerous accounts I heard about him I created a colourful, living image of this man and by no means considered as a stigma the occasional disapproving remarks that I had evidently inherited his character.

The story of my grandfather Stefan Bozhareff was rather unusual. I would like to note the essentials in which the accounts I heard from my grandmother and her twin sister in many variations were unanimous.

At the age of about fourteen young Stefan had not been able to look on indifferently as a drunken lord of the manor, on horseback, nearly whipped to death a peasant who happened to cross his way. The strong youth indignantly dragged the squire off his horse, tore the whip from his hand and lashed at him until he was lying motionless in a puddle. From the window of his nearby house the local parson had watched the scene and hastened to help Stefan; he knew the young Gypsy and had a heart for this intelligent boy, who was eager to learn and who distinguished himself from most others of his tribe by not only attending school regularly, but with obvious interest. Nor was he known to have been involved in brawls or thieving. "Come away from here, quickly!", he said, and pulled the youth towards his house. "You must not be seen here - or else they will murder you!"

Lukily no one was around for miles.

After this episode the parson had kept Stefan in his house for a number of years. He taught him many things and was rewarded

by the devotion of this quickwitted boy, who was silently grateful for every kind word and gesture, and who gave the aging man a helping hand in the household. One day the parson said to Stefan: "I'm afraid now I've taught you all I know, my boy. It was very little, and you need to learn very much more. Take this bundle, it contains my modest savings. And take these solid shoes, and some food. Make your way to Vienna. It's a long way, but you're strong and healthy and no one will begrudge you a piece of bread, a glass of milk and a place to spend the night if you chop wood, help in the harvest or milk the cow in exchange. Be honest and hard-working, then you'll make your way."

Stefan managed to reach Vienna, where he accepted any work offered to him. He slept in cheap places, saved every Heller, ate as little as possible and used the money for attending evening classes and buying second-hand books. Soon he became noted for his unusual intelligence and dedication, and he even managed to be admitted free of charge to the Vienna University - a rare exception in those days - with the prospect of a good career as a physician; on condition that he could raise a certain sum of money as basic capital.

Which he could not.

In Vienna before the First World War music lovers without money used to line up, often for nights, outside the concert house and the opera for cheap tickets. Some of them brought folding chairs, music scores, hummed and "conducted" to themselves; they engaged in heated discussions, or they slept standing. That was how Stefan Bozhareff had come to see his first opera, together with a fellow student. Instead of the absent prima donna that night, my grandmother, then a beautiful young woman, sang the leading part. Stefan fell desperately in love with her at first sight, did without food to buy expensive flowers and went every evening to see her on the stage - until he had achieved his aim.

She too quickly caught fire and adored the unusual and exotic young Gypsy. With the aid of connections she tried to obtain the necessary sum of money - of course under the seal of absolute secrecy. How the secret nevertheless leaked out was

never discovered. My grandmother would rather have died than say a word - but Stefan failed to get the envisaged position. His heated temperament led him to the hasty conclusion that his beloved could have been the only person to betray him, so that all his pains had been in vain. Without a word he disappeared from her life, leaving her pregnant, with the prospects of disgrace at giving birth to an illegitimate child from a Gypsy, in the conditions of imperial Vienna! Despair and unhappiness destroyed her singing voice, and she had to give up her hopeful career.

Decades later, just before his death, Stefan realised how unjustly he had suspected her, and how the misunderstanding had plunged her into misery.

A farewell letter reached her after his death, in which he bitterly regretted his mistake. But by then my grandmother had lived the greatest part of her life. The wound inflicted by the separation from the man whom she had never ceased to love was left open.

A childless couple from Graz was found, who became foster-parents for my father in his childhood. The man, a cobbler, kind hearted when sober, used to beat his foster son with his belt when drunk; which he seemed to have been most of the time. My father remembered having had to fish his foster father out of the river Mur, dead drunk after his visits to the pub on Saturday nights....

At the age of 14 - the same age as his father had been on the threshold of a new life - he ran away from Graz. One evening he turned up unexpectedly at the home of his mother and her two sisters in Vienna. The joy was great, but of short duration: on the following morning there was only a note on the kitchen table with the words: "Please forgive me - but you will either see me again as a hero - or never."...

He found work at the bookshop of the publisher Heller, where he was apprenticed in the trade of a bookbinder, and then worked there as bookseller for several years. He made use of the time to read all books that fell into his hands, accumulating an almost encyclopaedic knowledge. He became acquainted with many of the stock customers, who included a

wide range of scholars and artists, writers and politicians who decisively influenced my father's life - thus the poet R.M. Rilke, who encouraged the first modest attempts in the art by my father; the writer Stefan Zweig, who tried to recruit the young, talented bookseller, who was so well read and well informed, as his private secretary. But my father wanted to establish his own position, not to be the secretary of a man who had already made a name for himself. Walter Gropius gave him a scholarship at the Bauhaus in Weimar for a few years, where my father delved into abstract art - and Marxist philosophy. A decisive influence was exerted on my father's life by Sigmund Freud, who remained his teacher and friend up to his death in 1939.

When my parents first became acquainted in the early Twenties of this century, my father was an enthusiastic idealist with an empty stomach, empty pockets, threadbare clothes and great projects. All he subsequently became, and his considerable contribution to educational therapy and child psychology would be inconceivable without the self-sacrificing devotion of my mother.

I learned all these things in the course of later years.

"Oma Wien" ultimately found a kind-hearted husband, an elderly engineer whom my brother and I knew by the name of "Opa Richter", whom she and her two sisters cared for up to the end of his life.

For many years the youngest of the three sisters, Marie - called Rietschi - ran the household. She was quiet and modest and found fulfilment in caring for the little community. Both sisters of my grandmother were unmarried. Her twin sister, Hermine, was nicknamed "Dr. Monkus" on account of her wisdom and experience. A slender, resolute little woman, alert and quick, her grey hair combed straight back and tied in a knot, with glasses, over which she usually looked, on the tip of her nose (or over her head, the object of a perpetual nervous search), was the household and family manager. Dr. Monkus always knew exactly what she wanted - and what all others should do. Practical and capable, she worked for many years in an office as a lower-ranking official - a rare exception for a

woman in Vienna at that time, and now her modest civil servant's pension was the main source of income for the three sisters.

Their home was our first "harbour" when we arrived in Vienna from Berlin in 1933. At the Franz-Josef's railway station we were met by my father, who had also landed in the Lustgasse, after friends had helped him to leave Germany with great difficulties and dangers.

At first the place was not to my liking: the small flat was too crowded for so many people, and besides, the water tap, only with cold water, and the lavatory, used by several families, were outside on the landing. There was no bathroom. Later, when we were living in our own flat, I enjoyed visiting the "Grandmas" in the Lustgasse. Not only that they always offered appetising food, but Dr. Monkus, who knew a solution to every problem, was also a widely travelled personality for those times, and never in want of interesting stories. One fine day she had packed her bags and set out for the long and adventurous trip to Darjeeling in India, where her brother Emil had a tea plantation at the foot of Mt. Everest - the world's highest mountain. Heavily laden, and accompanied by her excited sisters she had started on her voyage, with a whole month at sea. Naturally she always underlined the dangers of that trip, which became the great event of her life. I was fascinated by her visual and lively accounts. Dr. Monkus had a flowering imagination, and every one of her reports of the same event was different. I could listen to her endlessly, even if I knew the stories in and out, and I did not mind the poetic licence in regard to various details.

Dr. Monkus was widely read, she was interested in world affairs and technical innovations.

She was particularly well informed about the most various horrible diseases, and when my brother or I were ill in bed, Dr. Monkus often used to come and help my mother to look after us. While my mother was busy with other things, Dr. Monkus used to sit in our bedroom, and while she was mending, darning or sewing she told us with relish about her adventures in India, or about dreadful details of the bubonic plague,

cholera, leprosy or cancer. My mother was horrified to note the rise in the patient's temperature as a result...

The Grandmas from the Lustgasse and another of the numerous sisters of that large family, our Auntie Jenny, selflessly assisted us during our years in Vienna - in the hardships of a new start after our escape from Berlin, up to the last moment before the next unwarranted departure after the Nazi invasion of Austria, five years later.

These women were respected and appreciated in their neighbourhood, for their kind, helpful and cheerful manner. In 1941, when they had to leave the flat in which they had lived for more than half a century, they also won the affection and respect of their neighbours very soon after they had been forced to move into an even more modest accommodation in the Glockengasse, in Leopoldstadt, the 2nd district of Vienna, up to the end of the last war largely inhabited by Jews. Years later we heard of their end.

In November 1942 they were driven out of their beds in the night by brutal, bawling Nazi beasts. They were forced to leave the house and chased out into the cold street, naked, and whipped onto an open truck, already overcrowded with other weeping, shivering people, doomed to perish in Teresin. One who survived the Holocaust said that Dr. Monkus went to meet death with raised head. She even found the strength to encourage others not to give the Nazi brutes the satisfaction of seeing their victims weep and wail...

The home of the Grandmas in the Lustgasse was too crowded, and soon we moved into rooms in the apartment of a woman by the name of Frau Ferenczi, in the 12th district, Meidling, on the outskirts of the city. The flat was in a new housing estate in an environment of trees and green spaces, called Am Fuchsenfeld. The estate was one of the new housing projects built under the Social Democratic administration of the city headed by a Lord Mayor named Seitz, within the scope of an unusually generous social welfare programme.

When we came to Vienna, Austria was experiencing the last months of democracy, such as the country had never seen before nor after. Up to the beginning of 1934 the Communist Party was still legal. One of the most elating experiences of that time, which I remember in every detail, was Mayday 1933 in "Red Vienna". After the constant fear, the cautious whispering and the oppressive burden of dangers lurking everywhere and at every hour, we all felt relieved when we marched along the streets of Vienna in a crowd of cheerful people, amidst a sea of red flags and banderoles, in a vast demonstration. My little brother and I also joined in singing the "International" at the top of our voices. My parents had tears in their eyes. We breathed the refreshing air of spring, the mountains of the Vienna woods were rising behind a bluish veil of mist on the horizon.

That view of the wooded heights on the horizon was subsequently seen from the windows and balcony of our own flat, also in a housing estate of the Vienna municipality, in the 20th district of Brigittenau. Before moving in there, however, a renewed blow hit my poor mother, who was just beginning to recover from the strain of recent weeks and months: I was stricken by dysentery....

Vienna in spring was always delightful, sunny and cheerful. I recovered from the disease within a few weeks, thanks to my mother's selfless and devoted care. I remember that I had to learn to walk like a baby when I got up again for the first time. A bundle of skin and bones and exhausted, I nevertheless enjoyed our entry to the new flat, which we inhabited not as guests or sub-tenants, but which was to be our own home. The flat was inside one of two square buildings of seven floors, girded by a balcony, accessible from two rooms, which flanked the approaches to the Engelsplatz from the Marchfeldstrasse, like an entrance gate. In the centre of the square there was a circular area surrounded by a ring of asphalt road. The square was hemmed in by concrete apartment houses of four floors with long rows of balconies. Various shops were in the tower structures at the entrance to the square and on both sides of a thoroughfare

on the opposite side leading out of the complex. Passages on the left and right of the square led into backyards with wide green spaces, playgrounds and various service institutions - washhouses and public baths. Our flat on the fifthth floor, door no. 13, had three rooms and a small room called "cabinet", a kitchen and lavatory. We went to the public baths, where one Shilling was paid for a regular bath, and 50 Groschen for a shower. My mother took us there once a week, paying one

Shilling for a bath for the three of us, and while my brother and I were scrubbed clean in the steaming bath tub we could hear my father cheerfully whistling in the shower cabin next door. On other days we had to be content with a cold wash under the tap in the kitchen, beside the stove; which we hated in the winter, and reduced to a minimum. If we were too dirty returning home from school and from the playground in the cold season, my mother stuck the two of us into a zinc tub which was put up in the living room near the red-glowing iron stove, and mercilessly scrubbed us clean.

Our children's room and the room next door, which was plastered with books up to the ceiling, like our "smoking room" in the Feuerbachstrasse, and which led to the living room, were surrounded by a balcony. The middle room, in which the "Singer" sewing machine had found a place by the window next to the balcony door and opposite a couch, was mainly the "realm" of my mother.

My father, who had managed to make a new start in his profession, thanks to untiring and courageous efforts and the help of friends, treated his patients in our living room, whose walls were lined with rows of books above the couch opposite two large windows, and which also served as our dining room - like the "smoking room" in Berlin. This room, like the balcony of my mother's room next door overlooked the circular space in the centre of the square, the belt of road surrounding it and the pavement in front of the blocks of flats around the square, which were always teeming with life: the clamour of children rushing about, chasing each other, playing ball or marbles; women running in and out of shops, or stopping for a chat, with shopping bags in hand or beside them on the

ground; people crossing over in the direction of the main road to the tramway, which linked Floridsdorf, on the other side of the Danube, with the city centre. On summer evenings I loved to stand or sit on that balcony, my legs stuck through the railings, dangling into empty space, watching the hustle and bustle down below, from the lofty height of the fifth floor of our house, or looking into the distance, beyond the flat roof tops of the lower buildings on the opposite side, towards the Kahlenberg, the wooded slopes of which stood out as silhouettes against the evening sky. The twinkling lights of the motoring highway wound their way to the top like a glittering diamond snake, to a brightly illuminated restaurant, a popular destination of Viennese and foreign tourists.

Just before nightfall, in the last glow of the evening sun, the clamour of the children playing down below and the twittering of birds soaring in the air welled up like a rising wave before rippling away in the dusk.

Early in the morning, after the first veil of mist had lifted, I could look from my bed in a different direction, through the open door of the balcony of the room occupied by my brother and myself: towards the Marchfeldstrasse, a high street leading to the Floridsdorf bridge across the Danube. On very clear mornings the pale blue outlines of the Carpathian range in Slovakia could be discerned on the distant horizon.

I still recall the night before my eighth birthday, when we had been living in Vienna for more than a year. I lay in bed wide awake. The clock on the wall of the Weinbergers next door gave three jarring chimes. My brother sighed in his sleep and turned over in his white wooden cot. The moon was casting a slanted beam of silvery light into the room. I leaned on my left elbow and listened to the eery silence of the night. The last tramway of line 31 had passed by long ago. Only a few hours remained before the break of the new day. The deserted Marchfeldstrasse ended in a black abyss on the edge of the bridge across the river. The reflections of a chain of alternating cold blue and warm orange lights from tall lanterns were dancing on the dark water below. As I watched

them, I enjoyed the snug safety of my bed in our room, but I wondered, with a vague feeling of curiosity, a mixture of thirst for adventure and apprehension, what was going on out there, what secrets were concealed under the cover of that night, what events were held in store by this ninth year of life, about to begin within a few hours' time, and by the whole long life that still lay ahead?]

In 1933 my family at first breathed a sigh of relief in Vienna. The new start was, of course, full of hardship - above all for my mother, at all times the main support and source of strength of our family; she was the one to shoulder the heaviest burdens of all practical problems.

To begin with much of the furniture in our new flat consisted of empty fruit crates covered with bright coloured oil cloth or small bits of material with lace-trimmings and flower vases, apart from a few items given to us by friends and acquaintances.

I was enrolled in the second class of the four-year elementary school, situated in the Leystrasse near my home. On my way to school I passed a small shop selling dairy products on the corner of the Vorgarten and the Adalbert Stifter Strasse, - then an unpaved track with small plots of land and small houses or sheds on either side, generally referred to as "Stiftergasse". The little dairy belonged to a Jewish family by the name of Nadler.

The small, short swarthy woman always had a smile for everyone, she and her family were known and respected in the area.

My mother used to send me to buy milk in a little dairy on the backside of our block of tenements. With a small purse, swinging a white milk jug I would go on my errand and wait impatiently and with anger about the long time Frau Stippinger, the shopkeeper, would take before she condescended to interrupt her endless chatter to serve me. A few yards away from the dairy there was a "Wök" - Wiener österreichische Küche, Vienna Austrian Municipal restaurant, an institution also created in the Twenties by the Social Democratic city administration, mainly in the housing complexes for workers, such as our Engelsplatz. excellent food was served there at low prices. At lunch time appetizing smells of Schnitzel, cucumber salad and fried potatoes floated up into our room through the window.

When my mother went shopping in the Marchfeldstrasse, she often bought her butter and cheese in a shop belonging to a woman called Frau Spichtinger. This little woman, about as high as she was wide, stood behind the counter amidst her aromatic cheeses in a white overall and white bonnet, patting the butter-portion which she took from a large appetizing butter hill with two wooden spoons with an interior surface like a laundry scrubbing board, placed them onto a piece of grease-proof paper on a scale, ate the butter above the required quantity with relish and then exclaimed triumphantly in her fatty, shrill voice: "Theeeeere - just right!!" She applied the same procedure weighing out the cheese, which she cut with a wire attached to a bow-like instrument. Up to this day I have an unfaded recollection of the luscious smells of fresh butter and cheese in the shop, and of and the chubby, humorous little woman, whose eyes, when she smiled, were reduced to narrow slits sunk deep into the soft mass of flesh in her rosy face...

A few paces away from the dairy of Frau Spichtinger was the Marchfeld Cinema (it was there up to a short while ago). I saw films starring little Shirley Temple there - in those days the great idol of little girls, of whom we could buy pictures at the cash desk; sometimes I would also go to see "adult films", to which only people older than 14 were

admitted. On those occasions my friend Liesl Endres, a fair-haired girl with violet coloured eyes four years older than myself, of great heart and slightly limited intelligence, used to dress me up, do my hair and paint my face with great care. Liesl and her older sister Hedi were the children of a tramway conductor, who lived opposite us on the Engelsplatz. Liesl, who had to repeat several classes, went to the same school, and we often met on the way to school.

In my form there were 34 girls, whose second names were read out in alphabetic order by our teacher, Frau Dr. Appel, before the beginning of lessons every morning: "Aschauer, Bauer..." I still remember most of them.

The teacher, small, plump, with strains of grey in her brown hair, combed back and gathered in a bun at the back of her neck, was a fascinating story-teller, and I still remember many details of her vivid, visual accounts. The reading primer came to life in her commentaries and explanations about "old imperial Vienna", across which "The Uncle" conducted the two children of his sister. Like our parents and other adults, our teacher also referred to the First World War, which their generation had experienced only fifteen years ago, as to a recent event.

To us, of course, that war, which had taken place before we were born, was part of a distant past - even further away than the Second World War is from the seven, eight or nine year olds today, who are in touch with the past over the TV screen - a thing which was only just beginning in the Thirties, when I was of that age. ...

Our teacher was not only a good story-teller, which brought life into each one of her lessons; she was also gifted with warm-hearted humour.

One day, when she entered the class-room, her eyes fell onto a "work of art" on the blackboard, produced by little girl: it depicted a round, fat bug, whose face was of unmistakable similarity to our dear teacher - complete with hair-bun - throwing up its front legs in despair, followed by a long row of little bugs crawling up the wall. Whenever we made the poor woman livid with rage, she would sigh, turn her kindly brown

eyes skywards, wring her hands and exclaim: "I could crawl up the wall with you lot!!!"

We stood in silent expectation, but the teacher only said: "Sit down!" And then: "And now let's remove the work of art from the blackboard, or else I can't write up the next exercise."

She spoke in calmly, in a friendly voiced, with a humorous twinkle in her kind brown eyes, as though nothing special had happened...

One day she said to my mother, reproachfully shaking her head: "You know, I am surprised: your daughter - from an educated home, speaks the most vulgar Viennese - as though she came from Ottakring or Hernals!!"

I had hardly been at that school for two weeks, and did not know that the two localities referred to were the poorest and most disreputable districts of Vienna in those days.

Shortly before my mother, who had always endeavoured in vain to make me into a "well-mannered little lady", had reprimanded me for my vulgar way of expression, in the way of the children I played with in the streets of Steglitz in Berlin; and a few years later I had picked up the jargon of my schoolmates in England...

The eloquent drawing on the blackboard referred to above used symbols known to most people in Vienna from their own painful experience: Vienna in the Thirties was plagued by bugs, fleas, lice and other vermin - as well as by frequent epidemics - scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles and other diseases, against which the Vienna municipality waged a tough and resolute struggle. Regular medical examinations, school polyclinics, holiday homes and camps for school children, recreation cures, school milk, all provided at low costs or free of charge for low-income families, were measures undertaken within the framework of this effort - subsidised by the city or the state budget. These subsidies were cut or removed after the defeat of the Socialist municipality in 1934.

My brother and I also came home from school one day, scratching our heads, and my mother noted with horror that little creatures were moving in the close teeth of the nit-

comb, with which she belaboured our hair, as she held it up against the light to examine it with screwed-up eyes. The "treatment" was disgusting: for days I had to run about with an evil-smelling "paraffin-cap" which burnt my scalp, after nearly all my hair had been cut off.

Nor did the bugs fail to invade our home, as they had obviously had done in many other cases in our environment, judging from conversations I overheard in the shops, in the streets and among neighbours.

My parents, who slept in the room next door to the room occupied by my brother and myself, were given a large double-bed couch by people whom my mother described as "wealthy and generous". The couch was greatly admired as the men who delivered it put it up in the place previously occupied by camp-beds. "As good as new", my mother commented.

When my parents slept on it the first night, I was roused by my father's voice next door, exclaiming: "Sophie - wake up! I had the bed-bug dream!!"

My mother, in a drowsy murmur replied: "Oh, shut up! I want to sleep..."

Silence.

A few minutes later my mother yelled: "Ugh! Eeeee! Milan - I think you were right!"

My brother and I, both wide awake and curious to see what was going on, hopped out of bed and peeped into the room next door.

The whole beautiful, almost new couch was teeming with little flat, brown creatures with many tiny little legs.

My father, with a wild look, stood in the room in his pyjamas, with a saucer in one hand, a flat kitchen knife in the other, scooping up scores of the little creatures and hissing: "One Nazi....and another Nazi..." as they perished in the flame of a burning candle on the saucer, and dropped, with a soft, sizzling sound into the water that surrounded the candle, like a castle moat around a fortress.

My mother, with dishevelled hair, in a long nightdress, was furiously spraying the couch, the books on the shelves and every corner of the room with a penetrating pest-killer which

scratched in my throat, with a kind of pump attached to a tin container.

The following morning my little brother was given "special instructions" while he was being dressed to go to the nursery - a private establishment, belonging to a woman named Steffa Schloß, who had admitted my brother free of charge out of sympathy and respect for my father, whom she knew in connection with his work.

"Now, Franzl, you will remember, won't you: not a word about the....bugs! That is our secret!"

"Hmmm..." he muttered, still sleepy after the excitements of the night, "I know: our seeecret"...and he nodded, looking serious and dignified.

That day the last lesson at school did not take place for some reason; I came home earlier than expected, and I decided to go with my mother to fetch my brother from the nursery.

She used to take him there in the morning and fetch him in the afternoon. This allowed her a few hours' breathing space, which she needed for coping with a multitude of business in connection with our "new beginning" in Austria.

When we opened the door, we were immediately aware that something was wrong. Usually we were greeted by friendly nods and glances by the other parents and the staff. On that day we felt disapproving side glances, and we were circumvaded like lepers. Soon we discovered the cause of this strange behaviour: my brother, dressed for going home in his white fur coat, was audibly whispering into the ear of another little boy: "You know, where I live we have bedbugs!....But that is our seeecret!!"

The other little boy stood there with wide open eyes and mouth, when his mother rushed up and quickly pulled him away, exclaiming in disgust: "Ugh! How disgusting! The Morgensterns have bedbugs!!"

My poor mother had a hard time battling against the little pests - assisted with help and advice by Dr. Monkus. The entire flat was turned upside down, everything was scrubbed clean, and in the end the pest-control squad arrived with thin, long spraying instruments, so that the whole house stank

infernally for days after; but people were astonishingly tolerant. Presumably they had their own experiences in this respect...

Time and again in later life I caught myself carefully scrutinizing every crack and fold of strange beds and mattresses for moving mini-organisms before retiring for the night...

My mother also developed a great skill in the art of catching and drowning fleas; which was significant, since my brother and I were plagued by flea-bites every summer....

During the years we spent in Vienna, my father frequently took us to a museum, exhibition or concert, and for excursions to the Vienna woods.

I had my first concert experience as a little girl aged about four or five, in Berlin: a performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, conducted by Bruno Walter. My mother referring to that event said that I had listened with patience and attention for a long time - but when I had evidently had enough, I said: "But- when the 10th comes, we can go home, can't we?"

I loved music from a very early age, and could sit for hours listening to my father whistling, or to my mother singing, or to music coming from the radio or gramophone. In Berlin we had a gramophone with a huge horn. Once I had stuffed all my stores of sweets and chocolate into the horn, to thank Chaliapin for his beautiful performance of the song of the Volga Boatmen. The gramophone was replaced by a more modern one without a horn, and I was informed that the music that came out of the gramophone or radio was mostly produced before, by means of invisible electric current and radio waves, and that the musicians were in quite a different place when we heard the recorded performance...

My first musical instrument was a mouth organ, on which I would play fervently - mostly my own improvisations - forgetting all the usual nonsense I was otherwise up to - even to quarrel with my brother...

The museum, exhibition and concert visits were highlights of

our life in those years, educational components, and experiences which made lasting impressions. We enjoyed them - but even more we looked forward with excitement to the excursions to the Vienna woods, since these were always associated with sunshine and blue sky. The other ventures were reserved for rainy week-ends.

The most memorable recollections of my childhood years include the sacred hours before the lights were turned off in our room for the night, when we were washed and in bed, and my parents would sit down to read to us. Both of them had the gift of reciting so vividly and visually, that it was almost as though we were watching a spectacle on the stage, completely immersed in the action, forgetting the time and place of reality.

This was the same when my mother, occupied with some knitting or mending, would sit on a chair, or on the couch, and we sat by her side to listen to her stories about her own childhood and youth - too fascinated even to continue our usual fighting and bickering.

The books which our parents read to us were carefully selected; to mention only a few of them, they included: "Winnie the Pooh" by A.A. Milne; "On Two Planets" by Kurd Laßwitz "Dr. Doolittle" by Hugh Lofting; books by Erich Kästner, Selma Lagerlöf, Jules Verne and Rudyard Kipling; poems by Christian Morgenstern, Ringelnatz, Heinrich Heine a.o.; plays by Chekhov, Gogol, Molière, Schiller, Goethe, Grillparzer, Nestroy and Raimund...

My father told us colourful, living stories about historic events, making them into part of our life, as concrete reality: the French Revolution, the October Revolution; the wars in Spain and Abyssinia of the Thirties. Entering our room, where wild fights and arguments were often in progress between my brother and myself, he used to say that he was going to Spain or Abyssinia...

We heard about famous musicians, artists, writers and personalities of history and politics - introducing them to us as living human beings.

Even long after my brother and I could read for ourselves - and we read a great deal from a very early age - we loved

hearing our parents read or tell stories to us; this was not only entertaining, but stimulating for independent thinking and reading.

My favourite books in Vienna included "Ede and Unku" by Alex Wedding; "Hans Urian", by Lisa Tetzner; "The Road to Life" by A.S. Makarenko; "The Watch" by Panteleyev; the books by Karl May, travel reports by Stanley and Livingston, Gino Watson, Knud Rasmussen and others, and legends and tales of many nations and countries.

My father supervised and guided our reading, but with the utmost tact and inconspicuous manner.

In Vienna I frequented the centre of the Socialist youth organisation "Red Falcons" - up to its prohibition in 1934. We went on excursions, sang songs, acted plays - similar to the activities I knew from the Young Pioneers in Berlin, where I had for a time been the youngest member of a group in Schöneberg, headed by Kurt (Conny) Linz - at that time a young teacher of mathematics, full of energy, enterprise and humour. (Conny died not long ago in East Berlin, at the age of 80...).

The year 1934 was eventful in many ways; it brought significant changes to life in Austria.

Two events in particular are associated in my mind with the year 1934.

In the winter of 1933/34 my father used to spend hours glued to his wireless, -earphones over his head, turning the knobs of a small box emanating strange squeaks and roaring noises, trying to catch every bit of news about the Soviet ice-breaker "Chelyuskine", trapped in the ice of the Arctic Ocean.

The captain, a scholar named Otto Yulievitch Schmidt had tried to explore a winter trade route from Murmansk to Khabarovsk - which he succeeded in doing two years later.

The name of that man, and the names of the Polar pilots Lapidevski and Babushkine, who managed to save all 28 members of the crew - including two women and one child - in a daring and sensational operation, were for weeks the main topic of conversations between my parents, their friends and acquaintances.

That issue completely seized hold of my imagination. I rummaged through my father's innumerable books for anything on the subject of the Arctic regions; I blocked the lavatory, scrounging through the newspapers and devouring every relevant item in the seclusion of privacy, and, to the horror of my tidy mother, I transformed our room into the arctic wastes around the "Chelyuskine" and commanded my poor little brother to utter exhaustion - in the role of "Otto Schmidt", of "Babushkine" or "Lapidevsky".

Since that time the passion for the Far North never left me. More than 40 years were to pass by, however, before my dream of exploring that part of the world was to become reality... The year 1934 was overshadowed by a tense situation in the country, which came to a head above all after Engelbert Dollfuss had come to power as Austrian Chancellor with a majority of only one vote, despite the support of the right-wing Heimwehr (Home Guards), also known as Hahnenschwänzler - cocks' - tails in view of the feathers on their helmets. He dissolved Parliament, and banned the left-wing militant organisation Schutzbund - Protective League.

My mother's household help at that time, a woman called Frau Schmiedeck - whose ancestry appeared to have gone back to the species of the horse rather than to apes, as indicated by her long horse-like face, with long yellow horse's teeth, brown horse-eyes, a horsey mane and a neighing voice and laugh - usually arrived early in the morning, when I was in the kitchen, getting ready for school. (I already mentioned that our flat had no bathroom).

In the morning of February 12th, 1934 - a day after my brother's fifth birthday - I woke up, hearing ominous distant crashes and bangs; it was not thunder, it was something else. The alarm clock of the Weinbergers next door announced that it was 6 a.m. Once again - thudding, bangs and thundering from afar. I could hear excited whispering from my parents' room. "That's gunfire!" I heard my father say.

A ring at the door; Frau Schmiedeck galloped into the kitchen. "A general strike is on", she gasped, still out of breath.

In effect, there was no light, no gas, and the trams were not running.

On the news it was stated that Dollfues was in Budapest and his deputy, a Major Emil Fey, described by my father as a particularly radical enemy of the workers, had used the occasion to mobilise the Heimwehr in an armed struggle against the prohibited Schutzbund.

These connections only became clear to me much later.

Frau Schmiedeck moved her powerful self around in our small kitchen and neighed without interruption. Usually her talk soared past my ears - but that morning I listened to her endless chatter. She said that they had fired on the workers in Linz the day before; that Dollfuss had said, better the Nazis in the country than the Socialists in power; arrests had also begun in Vienna. My mother was obviously alarmed by the news, and looked with apprehension to the window, when a renewed peal of gunfire made the window panes vibrate.

There was no school on that day. I was sent to Frau Stippinger with a purse and the white milk jug. The blinds were drawn, but the sale of milk was going on nevertheless - the women needed milk for their children. In the shop I met my friend Liesl Endres. She told me that her father had been arrested, and that one of her uncles had come and packed some parcels into Liesl's satchel, which she should take across the Danube bridge to her other uncle in Floridsdorf. Her mother had wept and implored him not to send her, but he had insisted, saying it was a matter of life or death, and no one would hold up a school girl. I decided to go with her. Our neighbour, Frau Weinberger, had just come in behind me. I handed her the milkjug and the purse, and asked her to buy and give the milk to my mother. The good woman just shook her head in light disapproval, and before she could say anything we were on our way.

Not aware what I was about to do, I skipped along beside my friend. In the Marchfeldstrasse we saw a derailed tram. As it lay toppled over on its side, it reminded me of a dead horse I had seen in a "Western" in the cinema not long before...

As we approached the bridge we were stopped by a very young

Heimwehr man - almost a boy: the bridge, he said, was closed, nobody could pass. Liesel immediately began to howl and yell, her mother was waiting on the other side, she had to go home quickly, or she would get into trouble. In the first moment I was bewildered - I knew that Liesel was not living in Floridsdorf -but then I realised what it was all about, and I also started to howl and yell. The poor boy was at a loss as to what to do with two howling girls, and before he had taken a decision, we were running fast across the bridge. We bumped into a man with a blue boiler suit, who tore us to the ground, shouting: "Lie down!" An instant later there was an infernal noise of detonations and bursting shells from all sides. I wanted to say something, but there was a powerful pressure which made my ears ache and something whizzed past, close to my ear. A hot draught of air burnt my face, blew my hair into my eyes and pressed me to the ground, when a shell crashed into the parapet. The bridge shook and trembled, and I thought it would break down and we would plunge into the icy water of the turbulent river below, and drown amidst the ice floes. As in a flash of lightning the recollection of boys came to my mind, who in the summer climbed the vast metal arches on the bridge, and then dived into the river from the lofty heights. Frequently people spoke about boys who had been seized by a whirlpool and dragged down into the depth, never to be seen again...

I was numb with fear. I had no idea what was going on and I wanted to go home. With a great effort I managed to control myself and not to howl quite genuinely. When the noise died down, the strange man took each of us by a hand, and ran with us to the nearest house-entrance. Luckily we were more than half way across the bridge when the barrage began. The man took us all the way to the address Liesel had given to him; it was quite far to walk - there was no tram. The streets were deserted but for a few men in uniform, with rifles over their shoulders, and a civilian here and there, appearing for a moment and out of sight the next instant.

In the kitchen of the flat we entered eventually there were several men, women and children. Steam from a pot on the fire of an oil stove spread an appetizing smell of Sauerkraut, and I began to feel hungry. The satchel was placed on the kitchen table, and the parcels unpacked....they contained ammunition. It was a drop in the ocean for those defending the Schlingerhof against the well-equipped Heimwehr; but by a hair's breadth Liesl and I would have been blown up on the way to deliver it..

The people in the kitchen embraced us and thanked us amidst sobs and tears. They were grateful for the least assistance. They held out only for another few days and were obliged to surrender.

We arrived home very late that night, accompanied by another strange man. My mother was almost out of her mind with fear and anxiety: how could I have run off without a word, particularly on a day like this, I always managed to do things that made her unhappy...etc.etc...

I was punished by being sent to bed without supper. I felt humiliated, because no one appreciated my "heroic feat". When I had pulled the bedclothes over my head and lay there sulking, I heard the door creaking and, peeping out, caught hold of a red apple which my father had sent rolling over the blanket. "There you are - great hero!! But you had better remember in future, that a good fighter must be disciplined! And now go to sleep, we'll talk tomorrow!"

What I did not know at that time, was the fact that the battle in Floridsdorf, the rising of the workers of Vienna against the menace of fascism went down in the annals of history of the Austrian working class as an act of desperate courage. Success in the struggle against fascism, oppression and injustice, as shown by repeated experiences, can only be won in the conditions of a united fighting front. Since this did not exist in Vienna in February 1934, the rising was defeated. For a long time afterwards the best representatives of the

workers of Vienna were languishing in Wöllersdorf, described as the first Austrian concentration camp...

Not long afterwards an episode came to pass which seemed to indicate like a bleak omen that our new beginning in Vienna after emigration from Nazi-Germany was not to be our ultimate destination.

The first warm sun of spring lured my mother to the balcony, where she settled with a basket of things to be mended. It was a mild Sunday morning, the aroma of damp earth was carried over by a gentle breeze from the Danube meadows on both sides of the river, known as the flood-area. When my mother took a bright red cardigan out of the basket, spread it out to find the place where it had to be mended - a sudden rifle shot cracked through the air. My mother went pale with fear, she chased us indoors, took her basket and sat down in the room, still trembling with horror.

A policeman down in the street had seen the red material and mistaken it for a red banner....

My parents immediately packed up a few things, and for a time we disappeared from our flat. We were offered refuge at the villa of a professor, acquainted with my father in connection with his work. I cannot remember him - only his wife - strict and unapproachable. She hardly took notice of us. We had to be quiet all the time - we were hardly allowed to move or breathe.

I could not go to school, and I was happy to be back home after a few weeks that seemed to me like an eternity.

It turned out that we had not gone into hiding in vain: in our housing estate and in others there had been a search for weapons supposed to have been hidden somewhere in the neighbourhood in 1918, and which were to have been used for the prohibited Schutzbund. The police had raided the whole area in search of "Communist ringleaders". There was reason to assume that my father was to have been among those arrested. But since he was not at home, nobody bothered about him; a systematic search for him would have been too much trouble. The thoroughness of the German Nazis had not yet taken root in Austria at that time..

Trams had resumed their activity, life seemed to be returning to normal. Yet several things had changed. The youth centre of the "Red Falcons" no longer existed. Our address had changed from Engelsplatz 2 to Pater-Abel-Platz 1. I knew who Engels was; but who was Pater Abel??

At school we were all obliged to buy, for 40 Groschen, and wear a little triangular badge, with an oakleaf on the ground of the Austrian colours, red-white-red. We were told that this was the badge of the "Patriotic Front". A song sung on all occasions, which we had to learn, indicated how patriotic that Front was.

I liked the melody - but the words were rather puzzling:

... "Ihr Jungen schließt die Reihen fest,
ein Toter führt euch an...
.....ein wahrer deutscher Mann..."

(Youths, close up your ranks - you are led by a dead man - he was a true German man..)

Did youths also include girls? And - how could a dead man lead the young? The song related to Dollfuss, who had been shot on July 25th, 1934. We were taught to love Austria, our homeland. But this dead man marching ahead, was described as a "true German man" - was that supposed to be a special honour? I found all this hard to understand.

In the summer of 1934 an epidemic of scarlet fever and diphtheria raged in Vienna. The school was disinfected, everything smelt of carbolic acid and one child after another in my school class and among our acquaintances fell ill. Day and night ambulances were stopping in front of the houses of the Pater-Abel-Platz as feverish children were carried out on stretchers, followed by the tearful eyes of weeping mothers and grandmothers.

I also contracted scarlet fever, and was carried away on a stretcher. Liesl was standing beside my parents and waved to me; her violet eyes were full of tears. I did not want to go to hospital. I had never before been separated from my parents for a longer time. A hospital - what an awful idea! Many people in a large room, all of them ill; you had to be quiet and do what you were told, they would give you

injections, compresses and bitter medicine...

Yet it was not quite so bad. The Children's Hospital of the Municipality of Vienna in the Alserstrasse, in the eighth District, had light, spacious rooms, with about ten beds in each of them. It was hot and stuffy. The children restlessly tossed about in their beds. My ears were aching and puss was oozing out of them.

The nurses, especially a little blond one called Sister Herma, with a freckled face and cheerful brown eyes was popular among the children. She was full of fun and humour, even though the work was very hard, always friendly and good tempered, yet consistent and firm. The first meal served after I had come in was spinach. I did not like spinach and I refused to eat it. "All right, you needn't eat it if you don't want to - but there will be nothing else for you! Not now, not for tea and supper and not tomorrow morning for breakfast; the spinach is patient, it can wait..."

I continued to refuse the spinach served again for supper - while all the other children had sandwiches with sausage and cocoa. My spinach, by then, was stale and cold... The following morning I could no longer resist: when the aroma of scrambled eggs, toast and coffee floated around my nose, I gave myself a kick, held my nose, and gulped down the stale, cold, green mess on my plate.

"Sister Hermaaaa!! I've eaten all the spinach!!" I announced - and promptly the empty spinach plate was removed, and instead a portion of fresh, hot scrambled eggs and a cup of coffee were placed on my tray...

Strange to say - that ever since I enjoyed spinach up to this day...

I spent six weeks at the hospital, quickly making friends with the other children; the nurses joked with us, and among the doctors there was one whom we all liked in particular. Not very tall, with thick dark hair and good-natured grey eyes under bushy eyebrows, he had a friendly word for every child and every nurse. He was called Dr. Jerusalem. On July 25th Dr. Jerusalem was standing by the radio with some of the nurses,

among them Sister Fels,- slightly older than the other nurses and rather strict, with straight black hair tied in a knot at the back of her head and blue eyes.

The assassination of Dollfuss had just been announced. On that day Nazi-killers, dressed up in Austrian military uniforms, had broken into the Chancellery, where they had shot Dollfuss at short range.

"Today they shoot Dollfuss, tomorrow they 'll swallow up Austria and the day after all of us will be sacrificed in a renewed world war", I heard Dr. Jerusalem comment after the news, with the music of a funeral march in the background, as though to underline the significance of his words.

It was hard for me to understand, why the Nazis should have been the ones to kill Dollfuss; I had repeatedly heard my father describe Dollfuss as a reactionary, or even as a fascist. According to my categories of thinking in those days, Dollfuss must therefore have been evil- and evil people included Nazis; so why should he have been killed by people of his own brand?

It was all rather puzzling.

It is astonishing, that on the day Dollfuss was murdered, Dr. Jerusalem had given such an apt prognosis of events in his brief and casual comment to the information just broadcast over the radio.

Years after I discovered that Dr. Jerusalem was identical with the publicist Fritz Jensen, a member of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War from 1936-1939, who had also participated in the campaign in China against Chiang Kai Shek which ended in 1949- and who perished in an air crash in 1956...

Returning after my long stay in hospital, I felt happy to be back in the secure and cosy atmosphere at home, with my parents, my brother and the "Omas"- as we used to call the three sisters in the Lustgasse - my grandmother and the two great-aunts,- who had all gathered in our flat on the occasion. When I entered our living room, I was welcomed by

the sound of Mozart's "Kleine Nachtmusik" coming from the radio; the book-lined walls of the sunny room, the bluish clouds of cigarette-smoke curling in the sun-beams and gently floating towards the open window, the reproduction of Rembrandt's engraving of "Three Trees" in a narrow black frame above my bed in the room I shared with my brother, the familiar view from the balcony - all these things were surrounded by a wonderful warm intimacy of smells and sounds associated with that unique environment. In the lavatory - which could be locked, in contrast to that in the hospital, and where no unexpected disturbances needed to be feared - I found a newspaper page with a headline in large bold print: "WAS DOLLFUSS THE FIRST OR THE LAST?"

In the Thirties intellectual and cultural life in Vienna reached a climax unknown since the days before 1914 - with brilliant theatre and concert performances. Trade balance and currency were stabilised to some extent; even unemployment figures were slightly reduced. For the moment it appeared as though life was back to normal, as though peace had been restored. But this was only on the surface. Social Democrats and Communists were still interned in the notorious Wöllersdorf penitentiary, and I caught occasional glimpses of the fatal results of long-term unemployment, chronic poverty and overcrowded homes in my immediate environment - casual remarks by children at school, scenes of violence in neighbouring homes which splashed out onto balconies or into the street...

The cultural highlights of life in those days were reflected in my experiences within the circle of my family, friends and acquaintances. Many of the great artists, actors, musicians and stage producers of those years were frequently mentioned in conversations among the adults in my environment. I saw their pictures in the newspapers, with articles on their work and life, and I saw them on the stage, in films and in concerts. Each outing with my parents was an event of great significance, which made a lasting impression and which I

enjoyed - although these occasions also had rather an unpleasant aspect as far as I was concerned: I was always expected to behave and dress properly, which I found most irritating. But I took this into account as a minor detail, compared with pleasure derived not only from the event itself, but also the "preparations" undertaken by both my parents, who told us fascinating stories about the respective works of art, their creators and performers - taking them down from their pedestal and making them part of our life and experience. After the rousing events of recent weeks and months, our ordinary daily routine was restored: we went to school, played in the streets, when we were hungry we yelled: "Maaaaama!" Whereupon my mother stuck her head out of the kitchen window, yelled back that we should stop yelling, and then let a little basket with sandwiches and an apple, dangling on a long rope and swaying like a parachute, descend from the kitchen window down to the street. This method was practised by many mothers, aunts and grandmothers to save children and adults the trouble of having to rush up and down many flights of stairs. The method was also applied by the mother and the grandmother of two boys, with whom I liked to play - and with whom I have maintained a friendship now over half a century old. They lived in a house on the other side of our courtyard. "Czech-Schapira" was the name inscribed on a little polished brass plate by the side of their door. The first name belonged to the grandmother of the two boys, both more or less of my own age. One of them, Marcel, cheerful, sociable, with light brown, shiny straight hair that was always slipping into his face, and large, clear brown eyes - the other, Bertl, warm hearted and reliable, an excellent pal in all situations, was rather silent and serious. He had black short-cut hair and very dark, very expressive, pensive eyes, somewhat smaller than those of his younger brother, of unusual intelligence and integrity of character. The two of them frequently caused their poor grandmother to fly into a wild rage. "Oma Czech" had a hot temperament and she easily flared up - but quickly calmed down. Although she had lived in Vienna for years, she

never lost her hard, Czech accent - which at times led to misunderstandings.

One day the good woman, coming from the market, brought my mother a small package. Broadly smiling and raising her eyebrows, she came into the kitchen, where my mother was preparing a chicken for lunch, asking: "Noooo, weeeell, you want bit of throat for nice soup?"

As she pronounced the German word "Hals" - meaning "throat" like "Holz" - meaning "wood", my mother looked aghast and replied: "Good god - wood?? What on earth for??!!" "Oma Czech" unpacked her parcel and took out the liver, throat and wings of a fresh young chicken.

My mother realised the misunderstanding, and both women had a hearty laugh.

My mother mentioned this episode on countless occasions during later years..

When the two boys drove their grandmother almost out of her mind with rage by their wild and often rather rude behaviour, she would follow them as they ran out of the house into the street, with a red, furious face, flying grey hair and swinging a scrubbing cloth around her head, shouting: "Marrrrzl...Berrtl...you want face slapped???" waving her hand with a threatening gesture that left no doubt as to her intention.

Her daughter, Leopoldine, the boys' mother, a pretty young woman, well built, charming, with golden, wavy hair and grey eyes, cared with selfless dedication for her Jewish husband, who suffered unbearably from rheumatism of the joints. Because of her loyalty and devotion my mother nick-named her "Fidelio" - a name that stuck to her up to this day; aged over 90 - "Fidelio" is still a faithful and devoted member of her family, great-grandmother of several children. "Oma Czech" also lived to a very advanced age. Today "Fidelio" lives in the flat above the one we once inhabited, which now again has the old address :Vienna XX, Engelsplatz 2...

While our life rippled along like a peaceful stream, events were taking place, which cast bleak, ominous shadows of

approaching evil over our existence .Anti-Semitism was becoming increasingly evident; with growing frequency I heard remarks of open or concealed hostility or disdain of Jews, from adults and children, at school and in the streets. It was generally considered a disgrace to be a Jew; Jews were regarded as inferior, second-class creatures. I

had learned these things long ago. Time and again, however, my father had reinforced the feeling - above all by stirring accounts of people who had shown great courage, steadfastness, solidarity and integrity in the face of persecution and humiliation- that those subjected to such injustice had to muster greater strength of character than their tormentors, and develop particularly outstanding qualities in every respect to assert their place in life. I therefore regarded Jews, Gypsies and Communists as heroes rather than as pitiable victims. It was above all the anti-Semitism which I had encountered in my environment since my earliest childhood that made me aware of the fact that I myself belonged to that group of people...

One evening I was turning the knobs of the radio, the green "cat's eye" of which was glowing in the dark room; engrossed in my search, I had not bothered to turn on the light, although the sun had disappeared behind the Leopoldsdorf on the horizon long ago . I was trying to find Yugoslav folk music, which I was particularly fond of. Ever since I had first discovered, in a previous "radio wave excursion" of this kind, the Yugoslav "Kolo", a folk dance with an elated, vibrant rhythm, I used every opportunity to try to find it again. Suddenly I stopped fumbling about, hearing the voice of an announcer, evidently about to make an important statement, saying: "Halloh, halloh, here radio Vienna!"

My father came hurrying into the room and interrupted my search, saying: "Stop! I must hear the news!" He shoved me aside and sat down to listen intensely. It was announced that Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg had been appointed as successor in office to Engelbert Dollfuss, as the new Austrian Chancellor. It should be noted that Schuschnigg was close to the Catholic clergy, but at the same time resolved to stand up for the

survival of Austria as an independent state. He disbanded the Heimwehr and endeavoured to keep Hitler away from his country. Yet, in making one concession after another to the German Nazis in the attempt to maintain peace and quiet, aware that Austria would not be assisted by any state in the world in the event of an open confrontation, and that, without help, the country would be too weak to resist, he involuntarily played Austria directly into the hands of Hitler. Schuschnigg recognised the only salvation - an alliance with the progressive working class and intelligentsia - only at the last moment, when it was too late. Schuschnigg was imprisoned in Germany from 1938-1945. After the war he emigrated to the USA, where he died at the age of eighty in 1977.

The year 1934 was coming to a close.

The autumn painted the leaves on the trees red and gold. When my brother and I ran about in the Aupark in Floridsdorf, or under the old chestnut trees in the carefully cultivated Türkenschanzpark, we enjoyed rummaging through the rustling leaves on the ground. After the wind had swept the foliage from the branches, Vienna soon appeared in its white winter garb. The "Maronibrater", with earflaps let down from his cap against the cold and turned-up collar of his long coat, stamping his felt-boots on the pavement to keep his feet warm and rubbing his hands, stuck in large mittens, as he waited for customers behind a large, round iron stove, has always been a characteristic feature of the street panorama of the city. Enveloped by a cloud of appetizing aroma, he would screw up scraps of newspaper into little bags, fill them with the hot, roasted chestnuts, or with a potato taken out of the glowing ashes, sprinkled with salt and hand them to the client for the price of a few Groschen.

After school I would often change into a training suit, put on a woollen cap, throw a pair of skates over my shoulders and rush out of the house. It cost 10 Groschen to use the lift; a notice warned against using it to descend. The children soon discovered a method of using it without payment - only

with the aid of a hair pin. The quickest and most popular way to descend, however, was to slide down the banisters - which was great fun besides; especially because it was prohibited. There was a skating rink not far from our house. In a long, noisy row a whole gang of us used to cross the courtyard, go through the archway on the opposite side, to a square called Kapaunplatz and pass by a gasometer, from where the music from the skating rink could be heard. We paid 20 Groschen for a ticket, then took off our shoes and put on the skates in a wooden barrack heated by a large iron stove, and rushed out onto the ice. A croaky gramophone emanated the same waltzes, marching tunes and song-hits popular at the time over and over again, as the motley crowd of skaters circled around the rink. Those who felt hungry could buy ham, sausage or cheese rolls and a hot drink for 20 Groschen at a kiosk next to the cloakroom barrack, and then continue to glide to their heart's delight over the smooth shiny surface. Now and then a sweeping vehicle would clean the ice and spray it with water to renew the surface. The newly sprayed area was closed off by a rope until it was frozen hard. While it was still shining like a mirror, it was reserved for the figure skaters, who always had admiring spectators stopping at the rope for a while to watch them. Amidst snow flakes dancing in the light of the tall arc lamps, the graciously swinging couples and single performers, young men in checkered jackets and knickerbockers, girls in red, green or blue velvet dresses with white fur collars and cute little white fur caps were floating, gliding and whirling over the ice. The remaining part of the rink was teeming with rather less artistic skaters - mostly children, but also mothers and fathers with their youngsters, as well as older sports enthusiasts. At the price of one Schilling per hour you could hire a trainer.

In 1935 I entered the last class of the elementary school. That same year my mother set out on a trip which was not entirely without a risk. She had a friend to whom she referred as "Mama from Breslau", whose disturbed daughter my mother had looked after for some time before she was married. My mother

was so worried about that woman and other friends, Jews and politically committed people, that she insisted on going to see them in the autumn of 1935, to try to persuade them to emigrate from Germany before it was too late. My mother had an Austrian passport, and at that time a venture of that kind could still be undertaken, but since she had left Germany under dangerous circumstances only two years before, the journey could not be considered as an ordinary tourist trip. In addition, party comrades of my father had used the opportunity to entrust my mother with messages. A few months later a project of this kind would have been out of the question. My mother was frightened of a mouse - but she was surprisingly courageous when called upon to help others in need. Besides, she had an excellent memory.

She took my brother with her - a woman with a small child would appearless suspicious, she thought... After about two weeks of anxious tension, my mother returned safe and sound. In her absence Frau Schmiedeck, Dr. Monkus and Jenny - another of her sisters, who lived separately from the "Omas" in the Lustgasse, - had shared the job of looking after us. My mother said that on the surface life in Germany was calm and quiet. Many Jews were deluded by this apparent normality. They were not willing to recognise the imminent danger threatening them as Jews; they considered that, surely a figure such as Hitler could not last for long in a country like Germany, with traditions of culture and civilisation; besides, they felt confident that "respectable citizens" such as they themselves, who had always kept out of politics and, in some cases, had won merits as "good Germans" could hardly be touched. The "Kristallnacht", three years later, brought them down to earth with a bump. Most of those who had been involved in political activity had disappeared "underground" by the time my mother arrived, - in so far as they had not been arrested or killed. All my mother's Jewish friends, for whose sake she had undertaken the journey, were either murdered in the "Kristallnacht", in November 1938, or subsequently in Auschwitz, Theresienstadt or Maidanek...

Almost every day of that long, cold winter people collecting money and clothes for the "Winterhilfe" - an organisation of winter-aid for the poor - would knock at our door.

Everyone was happy when, at last, they could enjoy the first warming sunshine of spring.

The summer of the year 1936 was particularly hot. My brother and I spent much of our leisure time at a childrens' bathing pool near the Danube bridge - the "Kinderfreibad", (childrens' swimming pool with entrance free of charge) , or as we called it, "Zecherlbad", (toe-baths) because the shallow water did not reach much further than our toes. We could see it from our front balcony, and we ran there and back home barefoot, in our bathing clothes. On some days we went to one of the swimming pools on the banks of the Danube - the "Gänsehäufel", the "Arbeiterstrandbad" or the "Angelibad"- today all conveniently within reach by underground. In those days it was quite a long way by tram and on foot.

During the school holidays we were sent to a "Childrens' Colony" - either to Küb am Semmering, a holiday resort in the mountains , to a holiday home called "Haus in der Sonne" (house in the sun), directed by "Tante Lintschi"

Ammanshauser, who cared for each one of us like a mother, or to the "Kolonie Wiener Kinder" (colony of Vienna children), a Jewish holiday home for children in the "Krapfenwaldl". a picturesque locality on the outskirts of Vienna, headed by a young woman named Trude Frankl, a glowing Zionist. In sports, games, excursions and in the routine of daily activities we acquired qualities such as genuine human solidarity and comradeship, persistence, skill, endurance, initiative, enterprise and courage. "Tante Lintschi" and Trude were convinced Austrian patriots, each in her own way. They had long talks with us, outside in the open air, during excursions, around camp fires in the evening, or in our dormitories before turning the lights off for the night. They read books to us and told us interesting stories. They made us aware that we were living in a beautiful country with great traditions in music, art and science, a country worthy of our love and dedication.

Both holiday homes had their own songs. I do not know who composed them, but I love them up to this day. They are associated with memories which always inspired me with courage in the most desperate moments of my life.

"Wir halten fest und treu zusammen..." (we stand together firmly and true)

is the refrain of the "KWK"-song; we remained faithful to that principle. In many cases over decades, beyond prison walls, frontiers and barbed-wire fences - in so far as we survived the years of Nazi-terror and war.

A large number of the children of those holiday homes perished in the gas-chambers of Auschwitz and Treblinka, in Maidanek, Mauthausen, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, and Dachau. The survivors were scattered all over the world.

"Tante Lintschi" hated the Nazis. She was a Catholic and an Austrian out of innermost conviction.

Trude Frankl combined her Zionism and Jewish convictions with the firm belief, that we also belonged to Austria. She conveyed to "her" children an unusual combination of positive feelings and ideas at a time when, on the one hand, anti-Semitism, manifest in a particularly brutal and emphatic form namely in Austria, was confronting the Jewish population, and when the independence of the country in which we were living was threatened. Trude made us feel proud- as Jews and as Austrians: we had no reason to feel inferior in any way; she made us feel that our behaviour and attitudes should not be motivated by fear and the striving to hide, but rather by courage and resolve to stand up at all times against injustice and humiliations...

On many occasions I have come across a sense of human kinship and solidarity among people who had common experiences within a good collective of children in their early years of life: among those who had first made friends at boarding schools, childrens' homes, holiday camps, etc. Such friendships often last for a lifetime; just as psychic injuries generated by

experiences in bad childrens' collectives tend to remain effective throughout the entire duration of adult life. For myself these good childrens' collectives - in addition to the security and carefully guided upbringing within an intact family, led to a conscious perception of and confrontation with the events of life in my environment - like the leaf on the branch of a healthy tree: despite all storms the tree and foliage can survive.

Four decades after my last stay in the "KWK", in the courtyard of a school in the Japanese city of Hiroshima, that thought sprung to my mind, when I saw a large tree, of which I was told that it had survived the atomic inferno, like a symbol of the assertion of life, arising in magnificent white bloom amidst the ruins of the annihilated city...

In the year 1936 there were "smoking heads" in our living room: my parents, a close friend of our family, Helene Löw-Beer, in those days a young research scholar in the fields of educational therapy and psychology, and a tall, elegant lady, an artist named Lotte Anninger, were sitting at the round table under the lampshade in the centre of our living room; in all our rooms, a mild, pleasant light was disseminated by white, round milky glass lampshades that reminded me of a full moon.

They were shrouded in a bluish veil of aromatic cigarette smoke, filling the room with phantastic, changing shapes, - a stimulating and inspiring atmosphere, associated in my mind since my earliest childhood with concentrated, creative work. Minute dust particles were glittering like tiny swarming silver stars floating in the sunbeams coming from the windows and spreading like a fan among the curling clouds of smoke. Heaps of paper and books were lying about everywhere - on the table, the couch, covered with blue velvet, opposite the windows, surrounded by bookshelves, and on the floor. My mother was clattering away at her "Mercedes" typewriter (acquired in the Twenties in Berlin, and a companion in two exiles, which served her up to the end of her life in 1981)...

In those days my father and Helene Löw-Beer wrote their book

"The Practice of Educational Therapy", with illustrations by Lotte Anninger, edited, corrected and typed by my mother. Frequently they worked until very late at night. Occasionally Helene brought along her friend (later her husband), Kusi Inoue - a serious and taciturn Japanese historian and journalist on economics. A great friendship grew between Kusi and myself: often he took me for long walks to the Vienna woods or the Danube-meadows while the others were busy working in our living room. I noticed that he spoke very little in the company of adults - but on our walks he talked to me freely about his country; he spoke good German, and I thought, perhaps it was easier for him with children than with grown-ups. I could listen to him without end. He not only told me what his country looked like and about Japanese people and their ways of life. He also told me many Japanese tales and legends, and he sang Japanese songs, in a strange sounding, somewhat hard and low voice. He drew pictures of Japanese landscapes into the sand, with a little stick of wood, in a few delicate lines - high mountains, the turbulent sea, palm and coniferous trees, weeping willows, pagodas, huts and fishing boats. Kusi roused a great passion and longing in me, which made me devour all books and magazines about Japan that I could get hold of, to listen to Japanese music on every occasion, to take an interest in Japanese art, literature, language and cooking.

In later years I continued my preoccupation with all things Japanese, made Japanese friends and saved up money to visit that country. More than three decades of fights against almost insurmountable obstacles - applications rejected and repeated year after year, in the endeavour to visit that country, - not as a member of an official delegation with much pomp and circumstance, no room for independent researches and discoveries, nor in a superficial tourist sight-seeing trip, but to explore the reality of daily life - I succeeded in the summer of 1979 - forty-three years after my first encounter with Kusi Inoue - to turn my dream into reality...

The summer of the year 1936 was not only heated by the glowing sun, but also by the fire of wars raging in Spain and Abyssinia. These were frequently the subject of conversations among the adults in my home environment. Apart from the fact that my father would often refer to the room shared by my brother and myself as "Spain" or "Abyssinia" on account of the noisy battles constantly going on there, he explained to us in simple words what those wars were about, and he inspired us with ardent sympathy for "Emperor Negus" (as Haile Selassie was nicknamed), and the fighters against Italian colonial rule, and with the Spanish Republicans fighting against Franco and his fascist adherents.

My father attempted to join the International Brigade fighting against Franco. When he was not accepted on account of his deaf ear, I saw him in a dejected mood for the first and last time in his life-although my mother was obviously relieved about that decision....

It was also in 1936 that the attendance of scripture lessons became compulsory for all school children in Austria. Up to that time my father had insisted that we should be brought up without religion. He felt that the religious indoctrination of children too young to form an independent opinion on questions of philosophy and ideology, would inevitably obstruct them in the formation of critical attitudes, and raise them in a spirit of subordination to authorities. On several occasions I witnessed how he defended his point of view in his rather radical manner: "I don't want my children to be doped before they have learned to think for themselves!" It should be noted in this context, that in those days the Catholic religion was closely linked with the ruling political circles in Austria, representing the ideology of the wealthy classes, supporting measures directed against groups and individuals campaigning for more social justice, and also supporting anti-Semitism.

Parents of school children received an official communication, obliging them, by the force of law, to send their children to religious instructions. My father's mother and both parents of my mother were Jewish; the Jews,

constituted a discriminated minority, and as such by nature solicited my father's sympathy. Obviously the Jewish religion was therefore the only option for my brother and myself. At the elementary school I had often envied the other children who had received lovely little "Holy pictures" - depicting saints and angels - from "Herr Katechet", the priest who was in charge of the scripture lessons, a man with a bald circle in the middle of his head, wearing a long black robe, tied with a black cord - reminding me of a dressing gown - oozing with oily sweetness. I even sacrificed pretty glass beads or sweets in exchange for a "Holy Picture". Until my father found one of them. He explained to me that in some cases these pictures were in fact reproductions of works of art, by great masters such as Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt and others - known to us from his fascinating accounts and from the paintings we had seen in a museum; others of these little pictures he described as badly painted, sentimental trash. He told us, that many of the Old Masters had used biblical subjects in their paintings, because people were familiar with them and could understand the message which the artist wished to convey.

The Bible, he said, should be read as a valuable work of art. It is written in beautiful language, and besides, the stories in it are referred to in the arts in so many respects that they are part of the general knowledge that an educated person should have, and an important component of world culture. Yet, he underlined, the Bible should not be understood in the way of a recipe, but rather in a symbolic sense, as a legend, or like a tale. "Herr Katechet teaches his pupils to take the Bible literally, to be obedient believers, without questions or their own ideas."...

In 1936 I was admitted to the "Schwarzwaldschule" - a private high school for girls attended predominantly by Jewish pupils. It had been founded around the turn of the century by the Vienna educationalist Eugenie Schwarzwald. The school had one section known as "Frauenoberschule" - "FOS" (higher school for girls), the syllabus of which comprised the subjects English, French and Domestic Science, apart from the usual subjects of

general education. The other section -to which I was admitted - was the "Realgymnasium" or "RG", where Latin and Greek were taught instead of Handicrafts and Domestic Science. Both sections took their pupils up to university entrance standard. The school occupied the top floor of a vast block of flats in the centre of Vienna, the First District, in the Herrengasse. The tenants of the apartments belonged to the upper middle class. Endlessly long corridors, with one door next to the other, were laid out with soft carpets, and it was hard to believe that human beings lived behind each one of the dark brown doors on both sides of the corridors, with their ghostly silence, empty and deadly still in a pale yellow light. That part of the house was strictly out of bounds for the girls of the school on the top floor. We called those long passages "catacombs", and we haunted them with preference, feeling rather heroic creeping about in this mysterious prohibited area. There were constant complaints by tenants, but we rarely allowed any of them to catch us red-handed. The short time I spent at that school was a happy and significant period of my life. The teachers - all of them university graduates and qualified specialists of education - constituted a stable team, mostly with long years of service. Their nicknames were known to generations of "Schwarzwald"-girls, subsequently scattered to all corners of the earth. Half a century later I came across two of them - one in Vienna, the other in Boston, both a few years older than myself, but they knew the teachers who had taught me by their traditional nicknames.

Each of these teachers was a marked individual personality, who gave their pupils invaluable equipment on their way which influenced their character, behaviour and attitudes up to the end of their lives. The common experiences and reminiscences immediately created bonds of kinship in encounters with former "Schwarzwald"-girls, even if their school days belonged to a distant past.

The teaching staff of this school included, among others, two renowned veterans - no longer young even in my time, two

sisters by the name of Josephine and Erika Weissel -known to generations of their pupils as "Jo" and "E" respectively. The former was the headmistress of the school when I was there; the latter taught German Literature and Language. "Jo" was a tall, stately woman, whose distinguished personality was underlined by her snow-white, wavy hair; her wise countenance, with light, transparent eyes inspired so much respect, that everyone jumped aside and stood to attention whenever she floated soundlessly and with the utmost dignity along the corridor. When she spoke there had to be absolute silence in order to hear her; she spoke in a very subdued voice, and when she addressed us, it was always on some solemn or particular occasion: usually in connection with some of our "misdeeds".

Her sister, "E", had a mop of grey hair, an intelligent face with distinctive features, and behind glasses in a thin silver frame alert grey eyes which saw everything going on in the environment. Her long neck rose out of a rather skinny body; she was impeccably neat in her appearance, spoke with emphatic clarity of pronounciation, using a careful choice of words, and conveyed to us respect and interest for the German writers and poets of the past and present, about whom she seemed to have an inexhaustible reservoir of knowledge.

Our teacher of Natural History was generally referred to by her pupils as "Die Erban". Lively, with blond curls and smiling blue eyes, darting about in her white overall, she was anxious to attend to each one of us. Her vivid accounts roused our interest, not only in her subject of instructions, but she stimulated our independent search for knowledge and our imagination. She encouraged us to write and speak about all we had found out concerning the animals and plants dealt with in class. I used to spend hours immersed in Brehms' "Animal Life", imagining lions, dingos, eagles, vultures, hippos and crocodiles in their natural environment, forgetting the reality around me.

Our Latin teacher, known as "Die Peters," exerted a lasting influence on my life by her remarkable personality and her methods of language teaching which helped me greatly in my own work in later years. She brought the remote past of classical antiquity into our classroom. The reception on our part was so enthusiastic, that our class was for a long time divided into "Greeks" and "Trojans", who waged wild wars in the intervals; one day an avalanche of combatants crashed into the classroom door - which gave way and broke down. We had to break the news to our parents, that they would be asked to pay the bill for the repair...

"Knopp" was the significant name of our mathematics teacher; the name sounded to me like the bark of a biting dog. I hated that ice-cold individual, with ugly, large ears that stuck out of her brown, wiry, fuzzy hair, colourless eyes behind glittering, rimless glasses, and a mouth that looked like a minus sign. She spoke entirely without emotion, as though her voice were not human, but came from a robot. "Knopp" was the only one of all our teachers, who entered the classroom saying "Heil Hitler" after March 13th, 1938; not only because it was prescribed, but with obvious satisfaction. She turned out to be a fanatic Nazi and anti-Semite...

The teaching staff of the Schwarzwaldschule in my time included only two men: Professor Flusser, a kind-hearted, but choleric individual, who could not resist our provocations and flew into a wild rage on every occasion, which amused us - and infuriated the poor man - who was, nevertheless, an excellent teacher of geography. Despite his temper and our naughty behaviour we greatly enjoyed his lessons and we were all fond of him - which he was aware of and which made him happy.

The other male member of the teaching staff was Dr. Bernhard Taglicht - Herr Doktor - hence the nickname "HERD" (the word resulting from the abbreviation meaning "stove", which is irrelevant in this connection).

"Peters", "Erban" and "HERD" were the main favourites among our teachers, whom we appreciated and respected. Their warmth of heart, their humour, imagination and empathy, combined with educational skill and absolute command of their subject made

their lessons fascinating, and we learned with pleasure, engagement and without effort.

More than half a century later, I discovered a little book written by the Austrian poet Erich Fried, in which a chapter was dedicated namely to "HERD". From that book I know that "HERD" had managed to survive the Holocaust, and that he died in the Seventies in the USA...

In lessons by other teachers we tended to play tricks with creative originality, giggled, or attended to other things reading books or writing letters, playing "Naughts and Crosses" etc.- but during the lessons of our favourites you could hear a pin drop.

Yet exactly those favourite teachers were the first to disappear after the Nazis invaded Austria; they emigrated, went underground, were arrested, deported, murdered...

Thinking back about those times, I must say that the tricks and pranks we played at school, or those my mother told us about in the stories of her youth, may well have been naughty, impudent and rude, but they were mostly humorous and basically good-natured, compared to the viciously destructive, brutally inconsiderate violations of human decency, discipline and contempt of human dignity encountered among school youth all over the world today, which often kills the interest and dedication of teachers in their profession and even ruins their physical and mental health. In a destructive frenzy, even very young children smash windows, ruin school furniture, soil toilets and wash-rooms, and behave towards their teachers with cold-blooded brutality, such as even children of the slums would not have dreamed of doing half a century ago. We were certainly not better than present generations of school children; presumably we were not yet flooded with presentations of violence, cruelty and moral filth accepted today as part of general media "entertainment" and promoted by a hectic life, with decreasing scope for human warmth and imagination, a life in which each tries, from childhood to old age, to beat the other in the race for wealth and power. Even the little toddlers in the nursery learn the tricks and ruses needed to survive: when and how you must say what to

whom; recognising what is behind all the nice-sounding hypocritical phrases used by adults and parroting them; disdain for genuine human values as ineffective and unpractical; glorification of violence and dishonesty....

At the Schwarzwaldschule I found my first real friends; with many of them I have kept in close touch up to this day. I remember the alphabetical list of my classmates in the elementary school and in the Schwarzwaldschule, and to each of the 26 girls in my class of the "RG" I can see a face and hear a voice... Above all I remember my "Blood Sisters" of the "LGGE-League" which we founded as 10 year old girls: Lia Rüber, Gitta Margulies, Garda Steiner and Gerda Messer. Lia, Garda and Gerda emigrated to the USA; Gitta unexpectedly bumped into me in England.

My closest friend among these girls was Lia Rüber. We continued to correspond long after we had both left Vienna, but after her last letter dated 1942 I had no further news, and all my attempts to trace her whereabouts in later years were in vain.

At school we were one heart and soul.

Lia had a pretty, slightly oriental face with fresh colours, bright brown pensive eyes; her dark wavy hair, with a side parting fell softly over her high forehead into her face. I remember her in a checkered dress with a brown belt, in lace boots and knee-socks. Her family lived in the Second District - Leopoldstadt - the Jewish quarter of Vienna - and the Ghetto under the Nazis. Lia spent hours at the large black grand piano which took up most of the space in the only room of this family of three. At the age of ten Lia played quite demanding pieces by Schubert, Mozart and Beethoven. It was her dream to become a pianist. Her father was in poor health, and when we became friends he had been unemployed for a long time. Nevertheless the couple saved every penny, in order to enable their gifted daughter to have piano lessons.

Lia and I told each other all our "secrets"; girls of that age always have a lot to whisper about. Later on we wrote long letters to each other. One day our class "RG 1" was taken to

the Zoo. The tram carriage was full of jabbering girls. The sun was shining, it was shortly before the summer holidays. After looking at the animals, we sat down on benches or in the grass in the shade of the large old maple and chestnut trees, where we unpacked our sandwiches. On that occasion I first heard that Lia's father was unemployed. By the time we had eaten our sandwiches and strolled about for a while it was time for departure.

We had been told to meet at a certain time by the entrance gate.

Lia suddenly said to me: "My father is a Communist; that's why he can't find work."

"Have you gone barmy - to tell me such a thing!" I replied abruptly, "how do you know that I'm not for the 'Hahnenschwänzler?!'"

At that moment I felt superior to my friend - not out of arrogance; I simply felt that I had to warn and protect her against dangers I knew about, but about which she evidently did not know. I knew, for instance, that political issues concerning the family were not the subject of conversations with outsiders.

"MEIN NAME IST HASE, ICH WEISS VON NICHTS"...

On that occasion I only mentioned briefly to Lia that we had lived in Berlin until the Nazis seized power in Germany. At that moment we heard the whistle of our teacher. We returned from the monkey cage, where we had landed on our stroll, to join the other children.

A few days later I visited Lia at home for the first time. Accustomed to a light and spacious home environment, I was horrified to see the dark, stuffy hole in which these lovely people had to live.

I shall never forget that visit.

A little plump woman, with dark brown hair and similarly lively brown eyes and fresh colours as Lia opened the door which had a heavy brass bell, knocker and a brass plate inscribed with the name "RÜBER".

Lia's mother led us along a narrow dark passage into a lightless room with a high ceiling. It was stuffed so full of things that there was hardly space to move: a table with chairs around it was in the centre of the room; the shiny black grand piano stood by the window. There was a camp bed by one wall, a couch by another, and innumerable books everywhere - almost like at home. Next door to this room there was a large kitchen with an old fashioned stove heated with coal and wood, another campbed and a dining table. In the room Lia's father sat on a soft arm chair of dark wood, with a worn out red covering. He was reading a newspaper: a very tall, broad shouldered man with strong, workworn hands. It seemed to me that all the members of this family looked alike: Lia's father also had large brown bright eyes and dark wavy hair - although it was rather thin - and a similar mischievous look in his face, just like his wife's. One of his legs was paralysed.

Lia served me cocoa and cake which she had baked herself.

"You two should by rights be enemies, not friends, shouldn't you?" Lia's father observed, with a twinkle of the eye, taking a large bite of cake.

"Why??!!" we both exclaimed with indignation.

"Well - I heard that you were 'Agamemnon' and 'Achilles' in your battles at school - and as far as I know, Agamemnon snatched Briseis from Achilles."

The reference was made to our "war between Trojans and Greeks" in the intervals at school; a few days before Lia's parents had also received the letter asking them to pay their share of the costs for renewing the damaged door. There had evidently been a serious domestic discussion on the subject, in the course of which Lia's parents had been told about the distribution of parts in this wild game.

"That's just a game," said Lia, and added that actually I was "Winnetou" and she was "Old Shatterhand", and those two really were friends.

As Karl-May fan and proud owner and lender of his works I had acquired that name.

"Can you remember Berlin?" Lia's mother asked me.

"Yes", I replied, chewing my cake.

"Was your brother born in Vienna or in Berlin?"

"In Berlin", I answered curtly; I did not wish to discuss that subject, not even here.

Then Lia played on the grand piano- and I played on my mouth organ, which I always carried with me. Surprisingly, Lia's father also played the piano, despite his work-worn hands. When I left the house, Lia went with me to the tramway stop. In the courtyard a small fat boy gave Lia a push and yelled at her: "Dirty Jew!"

Lia returned the push and said: "Shut your filthy trap!"

I felt quite ill with horror.

I had occasionally heard abuses against Jews among the children of the Engelsplatz - but also against the children of the Czech tailor Jarosch - but it was meant in the way of thoughtless, but basically good-natured teasing; but this was different; it sounded vicious and mean, like the Hitler Youth boys in Berlin who had called the Young Pioneers "Communist Swine", and who had let loose a vicious dog on me. I was seized by wild anger and indignation, and although the boy was smaller than myself, I violated the "ethical code" which forbade attacking the weaker. I grabbed him by the arm and slapped his face with all my strength. He began to howl, and immediately a mighty female with flying hair and red face - evidently his mother - came running out of the house.

"There they are again - you bloody Jewish pigs...they should hang the lot of you, I say! Just wait until Hitler comes here, he'll teach you a lesson..." the woman bellowed at the top of her voice.

"He started it all, we were just coming out of the house and he abused Lia," I shouted back, "and you're just a mean Nazi woman!"

"Whaaaaaat??!" The large Amazon raised her hand to hit me, but I ducked down and she flew to the ground, swept off her feet by the force of her own movement. In an instant a crowd of spectators had collected. At first some were applauding the fat fury, but when she fell to the ground, gloating malicious pleasure (the typical Viennese Schadenfreude) gained the upper hand, and they all began to shriek with laughter: shrill children's cackling, hysterical screeching of women, brutal bawling of men. Their laughter resounded in the whole house

burst out into the courtyard, it flowed out to the street, it swelled into an almost inhuman howl....

My father's book was published in 1937. Soon afterwards my father was invited to London by a producer and seller of educational toys Paul & Marjorie Abbatt was a firm known and appreciated all over the world. Their shop, "Abbatt Toys", at 99, Wimpole Street, London W.C.2, was not only frequented by parents wishing to buy attractive, instructive toys for their children, but also by representatives of schools, nurseries, hospitals and rehabilitation centres in all parts of Britain and from abroad. Paul Abbatt wanted to take up my father's ideas, producing and selling toys which he had invented in the book, visualised by the drawings of Lotte Anninger.

Paul and Marjorie Abbatt were not only business people. They were also motivated by educational interests in their work, wishing to develop, produce and distribute toys which could promote constructive and creative potentials in children. Paul Abbatt had started his professional life as a teacher of mathematics.

Although they owned a factory and a shop, the Abbatts were active Communists for years. They donated large sums of money to solidarity funds for the International Brigades in Spain; they saved the lives of numerous anti-fascists from Nazi Germany, occupied Austria and Czechoslovakia - including my own family.

My father wrote enthusiastic letters from England, and, of course, I was also anxious to see that country, to cross the Channel and to feed the pigeons on Trafalgar Square in London; a wish which was to be fulfilled sooner- and far less agreeably- than I could imagine at the time ...

My interest in England had seized hold of my imagination to such an extent that, when seized by a violent attack of pneumonia, I constantly had visions in fever delirium of travelling to England.

In those days, before the discovery of sulphonamides and penicillin, pneumonia was a very serious disease. For almost two months I was in the grip of very high temperatures, with my mother desperately trying to save

my life. Day and night I was tormented by pains and delirious visions . I remember one night, when suddenly a terrier with murderous eyes appeared, hovering over me on the lampshade; another time I saw the apparition of my fat

classmate Vilma Janitschek at the foot end of my bed; she abused me for attending Jewish scripture lessons. I grabbed hold of a stool next to my bed and threw it at the iron stove which stood in that place. Then I was rolling through a dark tunnel in the "Grotto-Train" of the Vienna Prater (Fun-Fair), crossing the Channel on the way to England. Our Latin teacher, "Peters" was waving good bye. I had to hurry, and I did not leave my poor mother, completely exhausted from caring for me, in peace, before she had hopped out of bed, opened the window and called loudly into the night - so that Lia should at least know where I had gone...

When I was at last well enough to leave my bed, I had to learn to walk with the aid of my mother and Dr. Monkus - just as in the first days after I had dysentery..

The spring of the year 1938 began unusually early, with brilliant sunshine. By the end of February there were bright warm days, and one Sunday my father took me out to the Vienna woods. He led me up steep paths and walked very fast. After a while I was exhausted and wanted to go home - but my father would hear no complaints.

"You must hold out", he said. "Fatigue, hunger and thirst must be overcome... Unless you learn to do that, how would you survive, if you suddenly found yourself alone, without help, and without money? I think we must all be prepared for the worst these days. The most important thing is, that you should never, under no circumstances, be dependent on other people. And remember, that those who cannot master themselves will be mastered by others!"

It was Monday, March 7th, 1938 - a day after my mother's 42nd birthday.

My father returned home late at night, after my brother and I had gone to bed.

I heard him say to my mother, that the prohibited "Red Trade Union" had held

a meeting in Floridsdorf. "It was the first time after many months that I heard the word 'Comrade' said aloud...they said that today we all had only one common enemy - Adolf Hitler, who was waiting at the door to invade Austria, and that in this situation we had no choice, but to stand together with all who wished to keep out the Nazis - even with people we generally regard as reactionaries, with clergymen, private businessmen, officials... They all called for freedom... there were hundreds of them... and then we all sang: "We are the workers of Vienna"...

Tuesday, March 8th, 1938.

Lia and I were on our way home from school. When we turned into the Schottenring from the Herrengasse, we were suddenly swept forward amidst a crowd of pushing, shouting people. It was impossible to get out of the jostling mass. On the Kärntnerstrasse we heard terribly coarse, barking shouts of "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!" by hundreds of voices.

Nazis!!!

I felt cold with horror. We held hands, clung to our satchels and made a desperate attempt to break out of this stream of people. The wild crush pushed and pulled us along the Kärntnerstrasse and the Rotenturmstrasse, as far as the Danube Canal and into the Leopoldstadt... but we could not make our way to Lia's home. At last we were able to break away from the crowd and to escape into a narrow side street. There we parted and each of us went home in different directions. When, at last, I arrived at home, my mother was almost at her wit's end with worry.

For the rest of that week I was not allowed to go to school. My mother excused me because of "Influenza".

On Friday, March 11th, my brother and I went out for a walk with Frau Slunsky - the successor of Frau Schmiedeck; she had to give up her work to see to her son Vicky, who was getting out of hand.

Frau Slunsky, an elderly, careworn, slender woman with sparse grey hair, grey eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses, was sensitive and understanding, skillful and many-sided in her inconspicuous way. In contrast to Frau Schmiedeck she

was quiet and calm, but she had great life-experience and practical wisdom, and was like an older friend to my mother. That friendship lasted up to Frau Slunsky's death long after the war, and was extended to her daughter Marianne up to the end of my mother's life.

My alleged "Influenza" was of no interest to anybody in those days. There was continuous unrest in the streets, for hours the tramways did not operate, and finally schools were closed.

The sun was shining in the clear blue sky, birds were twittering, mild air was streaming into the kitchen through the open window. The Leopoldsberg was still concealed behind a veil of morning mist. Frau Slunsky packed sandwiches and apples into her little basket, and off we went. When we crossed the Pater-Abel-Platz in the direction of the Danube bridge, we suddenly heard an ominous drone. A few seconds later the sky was darkened as uncounted German aircraft in military formation flew over the light façades of the houses around the square - like a swarm of vicious, dangerous hornets. The aggressiveness of Hitler towards Austria had reached a climax in recent days. A plebiscite was envisaged for March 13th on the question: "Yes" to Schuschnigg, or "No" to the Austrian government, in favour of the Nazis. The Austrian President Miklas received an ultimatum from the Nazis: either Schuschnigg is replaced by the pro-fascist Seyss-Inquart with a Nazi government, and the Plebiscite of March 13th is called off - or Hitler would invade Austria. As a sign to show that the threat should be taken seriously, Nazi troops were concentrated along the German-Austrian frontier. Nazi hordes bawling and barking in a chorus were marching along the streets of Vienna and other Austrian towns - and now droning Nazi aircraft were darkening the blue Austrian spring sky. Full of fear and terror, the First World War still alive in their memory, men and women stuck their heads out of their windows, casting angry glances towards the unwanted intruders roaring above their heads, and shook their fists in a threatening gesture in the direction of the low-flying Nazi-hornets. From all corners of this square, which had been named after

Friedrich Engels up to recent years, resolute voices cried out: "No! We don't want war! We don't want Hitler!"

I shall never forget that scene.

When we reached the Danube meadows I was seized by an irresistible urge to embrace the earth; I threw myself into the fragrant grass, rolled about like a puppy, together with my brother, who was evidently "infected" by my behaviour. It was as though I instinctively felt the approaching end of an important and very memorable and decisive period of my life, and the sad parting from all things dear to me within the near future. I enjoyed every moment of that spring morning, I breathed in the air and absorbed everything into the depth of my being: each blade of grass, each ripple on the green water of the Danube, every house, every arch and pillar of the bridge, the big clock on the opposite river bank beside the childrens' bathing pool; I took in the wide view towards the steep slope of the Leopoldsberg dropping down towards the Danube, known as the "Nose", the panorama of the green plain extending as far as the outlines of Klosterneuburg on the hazy horizon. I wanted to fix every minute detail in my mind, determined never to forget. At that moment I felt with all my heart: "All this is mine...I belong to it...how I love this earth...."

The Nazis were in power.

Anything in their way was knocked down. As stimulant and outlet Communists and Jews were thrown as prey to mob violence, in the same way as in Germany five years before. Yet - the scenes which had taken place in Germany when the Nazis seized power - abominable as they had been - could almost be described as "mild" compared with the bestial excesses in which innumerable "good-natured" Austrians participated in March 1938.

Apart from the charming and light-hearted cheerful side of that which is described as the "Austrian national character" there is also another side, which is extremely repugnant: gloating pleasure at the expense of others (Schadenfreude) is its main feature. That quality is very frequently evident among a

significant part of this generally musical and soft-hearted nation, above all in the incited mob. Things which normally ripple lightly on the edge of Austrian life as side-phenomena - in the form of gossip, gloating mockery or grouching - can very quickly result in the development of the most vile informers, brutal sadism and vicious aggression, if the green light is given to mob violence. "A Hetz", "a Gaudi" - having fun - especially at the expense of others - has always been a favourite leisure occupation of the masses in Austria. The Nazis consciously whipped up all primitive instincts in that mass. Everything that was basically inadmissible and in violation of the principles of justice, law, religion and human civilisation was suddenly permitted to everyone - to children, adolescents and adults, men and women - provided it was directed against Jews and Communists. Howling, de-humanised crowds with sadistically distorted faces relished in the destruction and pillage of Jewish shops, as spectators and as actors; they watched with satisfaction as Jewish men and women - among them old and sick people who found it hard to move - were dragged by arrogant SA-men out of their homes and forced with horse whips to wipe away the slogans against the Nazis for the plebiscite planned for March 13th from the pavement. With bare hands they were forced to dip floor cloths into buckets of hydrochloric acid and to scrub the pavement on their knees, surrounded by a crowd of bestial sadists, who were free to jeer and spit at them, to kick them and to throw stones and dirt at them. Jewish doctors were dragged from their surgeries, professors from the university, musicians from their instruments, and sick people from their beds. Orthodox Jews and rabbis in their caftans were driven to the slaughterhouses and forced with blows and kicks to go on their knees and to lick up the blood of pigs from the soiled floor. The transition from normal life to this indescribable horror came overnight. The Nazis began to rage as soon as they had set foot across the frontier. At school the teachers were forced immediately to raise their hand for the Nazi salute as they entered the classroom. Jewish children had to sit on the back benches. Since the majority of pupils at the

Schwarzwaldschule were Jewish, the three "Aryans" in our class sat as a lonely, isolated group in the front row, the row behind them was empty, and the other 23 girls were crowded in the back rows. If this had not been a symptom of a monstrous tragedy, this grotesque situation would have been ridiculous; but in those days none of us felt like laughing. When I first began to attend the scripture lessons of "HERD", the others could all read and write Hebrew fairly well. It was painful and irritating for me to know less than the others in my class - and out of spite I refused to learn Hebrew. As a whole, however, I liked the lessons with "HERD" - a little man with thin grey hair, an almost white goat's beard and kindly, wise, light eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses. He was able to render the Biblical texts of the Old Testament with so much imagination and life, linking them with our own daily experiences, that we listened to him with breathless tension. He was able to involve us in the work, to stimulate our curiosity, to provoke questions and to encourage us to discuss problems of our environment. To "HERD" God and religion were symbolic of human ideals and human rules of conduct, not imposed by threats or coercion, but materialised by insight, self-respect and appreciation of others. As in Trude Frankl's "KWK", "HERD" also consolidated our awareness of belonging to a community with great cultural traditions, but also with a history marked by persecution and oppression, which obliged us to prove to the world that we were stronger, more capable, more courageous and steadfast than our tormentors. Above all "HERD" encouraged us to stand firmly together in every situation. Only on one occasion I remember "HERD" - always full of humour and fun - serious and in anger: when one girl informed about a misdeed of another. "If you don't approve of your classmate," he said, "then argue the matter out with her - or are you too cowardly or stupid to do so? Always remember: a tell-tale as a child will be a yes-man and an informer as an adult - disgusting!" "HERD" had become quite pale with fury; he wiped the sweat from his high forehead. Embarrassed silence reigned in the classroom.

Then the bell rang in the corridor. The lesson ended.

That was the last time I saw "HERD"...

Our conversations before and after lessons and at break time were no longer the untroubled chatter and laughter of little school girls, as they had been a few days before.

"Last night they came for the Freudenberges... Thank goodness they haven't been to our house yet..."

"What's the matter with Gerda Messer? Is she ill?"

"Perhaps they have left; they wanted to go to France..."

"Maybe... they have been taken away..."

"We're going to America! Daddy got the Affidavit yesterday - but don't tell anyone!"

("Affidavit" and "Permit" - entry visa to the USA and Britain - were words which had come to occupy an important place in our conversations.)

"Noone should talk to Hedi Bobbrich from now on - her uncle is a big bug in the SA!"

We spoke in whispers, looking round anxiously all the time to make sure no unwanted eavesdroppers were nearby; nobody concentrated on school work, everybody was restless and nervous.

When my family was gathered around the supper table one evening, there was a persistent ringing and knocking at our door. Dusk was falling; the light had not yet been switched on; only the light of the cat's eye of the luminous dial of the radio, playing soft music, was casting a pale green light into the twilight of the room. I ran to the door. Hedi Endres - the older sister of my friend Liesl - stood there, in tears, shaking and trembling.

Stammering in anxiety, she warned my parents not to turn on the light, not to show themselves at the window, the Nazis wanted to fetch them for scrubbing the streets, because my father was a red swine and a dirty Jew, and the SA was honeycombing all houses for Jews and Communists. When Hedi had left, we all stood in the dark, full of fear and apprehension, peeping through the window, concealed behind the curtains. Shuddering with horror we looked at the men and women down there, on their knees, scrubbing, groaning and

weeping, assaulted, jeered, humiliated, insulted and tormented by the frenzied sadistic mob around them...

That evening we were spared.

My father lost no time, running to authorities to obtain the necessary documents, stamps and signatures. Paul Abbatt had obtained a "Permit" for my family almost immediately after the Nazi invasion of Austria - an acquisition of immense value. All countries limited the immigration quotas to a minimum. With every passing day the effort to obtain a "Permit" for England or an "Affidavit" for the USA was linked with even more running and waiting in various offices and with rising costs. In many cases the arrangement of emigration had become a lucrative business for unscrupulous man-traders. We know today how many ships without harbour, overcrowded with refugees from the Nazi-occupied countries cruised the seven seas, rejected by all countries and finally ending in concentration camps or shipwrecks...

My mother, Frau Slunsky, Dr. Monkus and Tante Jenny packed all our earthly possessions - above all books - into altogether 29 crates and numerous suitcases. Many things were burnt in the iron stove, which glowed day and night, as we all cleared and packed up everything, in constant fear of the ringing and knocking of the SA and SS. Our dear neighbours, the Weinbergers - father, mother, son and daughter - subsequently sent to the gas chambers in Auschwitz, supplied us with warm meals, sandwiches and hot drinks. They helped us to nail up the crates and *to dispose of* the rubbish.

At school the Jewish pupils boycotted the privileged "Aryan" classmates, who were invited to frequent entertainments, while the rest of us had to stay in class. We moaned over the endless boring and senseless exercises our teachers were forced to make us write. After school I went with Lia to the Augartenbrücke, a bridge across the Danube Canal, where an Italian ice cream shop had enticed me to spend all my money intended for the tramway tickets; this meant getting up an hour earlier and walking all the way from the Pater-Abel-Platz to school in the Herrengasse...

We bought ice cream and headed for Lia's home. Suddenly we were surprised by a shower. We turned into a side street lined with rows of grey tenement houses to find shelter in a house entrance. I had two rolls with sausage left in my satchel. I handed one to Lia, who took it with pleasure. As we were about to eat the rolls, we stopped short, as we heard a piercing scream, and then croaking and groaning. We went to the door of the house and saw through the opaque, dirty barred windows of a cellar to the right of the door, a scene that made us stiff with horror: in the pale yellow light of the cellar I recognised the shapes of three men standing against a wall; covered in blood, with clothes hanging down in rags. Two strong young fellows in SA uniform were beating them with fists and sticks. Yet, in between groans and cries of pain I heard fragments of the words and melody of the song of the Vienna workers. The men battered and kicked their victims again and, shouting insults and abuses. The voices of the three maltreated men grew weaker, and then one of them could stand no longer. His two comrades, themselves almost on the point of breaking down, tried to support him, but the next instant all three of them lay on the ground motionless, while the two beasts continued to beat and kick them.

We were paralysed with fear and unable to budge, until the sound of nailed boots on the pavement, shouting and slamming doors on the staircase brought us back to life. Two men in SA uniform were dragging an old Jew by his arm and white beard into the street, belabouring him with their fists and nailed boots. Lia and I ran away as fast as we could. Exhausted, sweating and trembling with fear we reached Lia's house. The door of the flat was wide open. We went in with hesitation. The rooms had evidently been searched: wardrobes and drawers were open, torn books and broken crockery were lying on the floor.

The flat was deserted and silent.

We held hands, unable to utter a word. When someone came through the door behind us, we both gave a start. It was Lia's uncle, who lived two floors above in the same house with his

family.

"Come away from here, quickly, children," he said and laid his arm around Lia's shoulder. "The Nazis came for your parents... We were not at home at that moment, otherwise they would have taken us away as well", he said. After Lia had overcome the first shock, she began to weep.

"Never mind, my girl, you'll come to us", he tried to comfort her.

"Lia... Achilles... Old Shatterhand... don't cry.. I'm sure your parents will soon come back! They didn't even seal the flat! I'm sure it was only a raid... or whatever you call it", I tried to comfort my friend, although I strongly suspected that people taken away by the Nazis were not likely to be back soon - if at all...

A woman with a coal bucket hastily slipped by, as though she had not noticed us.

I wanted to go home quickly. Lia's uncle, a frail little man, almost bald, with a thin voice and sad, moist dark eyes, did not want to let me go. It was very late, but I wanted to go home - who could tell what had gone on there in my absence. Lia's uncle had a look to see whether any men in uniform were around, but he returned immediately, saying: "All clear!" Lia and I embraced.

"Winnetou - Agamemnon" and "Achilles - Old Shatterhand" took leave, trying hard to hold back their tears. They swore never to forget their friendship.

I never saw Lia again

I do not remember how I got home that night. I only remember that I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw that the door to our flat was closed, and that I heard voices inside when I rang the bell of "door 13".

My poor mother, exhausted by all the tensions and anxiety of recent days pelted me with reproaches, but I was so happy to see her, that I would not even have minded a good walloping. I threw my arms around her neck, weeping, and told her, amidst sobs, what I had experienced that day. Then my mother also burst into tears. Luckily Frau Weinberger happened to be in our kitchen just then. She was a motherly and courageous little woman, who calmed both of us. My father was still out. Everything was packed; our "Omas", Frau Slunsky, the Weinbergers and Liesl's family had assured us that they would send off all our things and urged us to leave as soon as we could. My father returned very late, after he had coped with the last formalities for our journey. He was pale and worn out, and began to speak while he was eating sandwiches served to him by Frau Weinberger. The consulates of Switzerland, Britain and France, he said, were besieged by Jews anxious to leave the country. He had to wait for hours everywhere. Many people had been arrested in the street as they left the consulates. My father had been lucky. "Everything was in an awful chaos", he said. "On the other hand we should be grateful that the German thoroughness and systematic order haven't yet been established here..."

That same night they came for my parents.

Thumping boots and gruff voices tore me out of my sleep. "Look at that! So the Communist swine want to go on a trip..." I hear a jeering male tenor voice next door. "But those who have no passport have to stay at home, old boy, didn't you know that?" "Where is your passport, you bastard?" asked the gruff voice. And then my mother's voice: "Mind your manners, young man! I won't have your talking in this way in my house!"

"I'm the one to give orders here!" said the gruff voice, "And now stop that nonsense and come along! Quickly, if you please! I can't waste any more time!"

Another short exchange of words; thumping steps; then the door was slammed.

Silence.

All this happened so quickly that I only began to realise the situation after they had left.

The passports!

I clearly remembered that my father had deposited a large envelope containing our passports and documents on the desk, under a briefcase, commenting: "They are safe here! One can't find a thing here in this mess..."

I hopped out of bed and ran into the living room, where the light was still burning. On the way across the dark middle room I bumped into a large book crate and knocked my knee against it.

The desk, which had been moved to the living room from its usual place next door was strewn with boxes, bags and rucksacks. I found the envelope with the passports under the briefcase. Meanwhile my brother had also woken up and began to cry. I stood in the living room, amidst crates, boxes and luggage, wondering what to do next when I noticed the cut telephone wire. It made me think of that night in Berlin, when I experienced a house search for the first time...

For several months our small room, the "Cabinet", had been inhabited by one of my father's patients: a girl of 15, with a very wealthy family, named Nelly Kraus. She had come for treatment, because she was afflicted by a severe neurosis. She could hardly eat anything, and what she ate had to be mashed up. The doctors had discovered no physical symptoms that might have been the cause. She had come to live with us for a time, and my mother had to prepare all her meals separately. She was a frail creature with dark, straight hair and dark, nervously blinking eyes which reminded me of a night owl caught in a beam of light in the dark. My brother and I saw very little of her; we only knew that she indulged in an occupation

we described as "window-sport": she could be heard at all hours of the day and night opening and shutting the windows of her room. I was interested in her only in as far as she owned an upright grand piano which stood in her room and she allowed me to play on it when she was away visiting her family. When my brother woke up that night and called for his mother, Nelly came out of her room and asked what was going on. When I had told her, she took charge of my brother and suggested that I should try to find my parents at the police station in the Marchfeldstrasse; she had heard that Jews were rounded up and taken there to be deported. "Surely they will let them go if you produce the passports!"

That sounded plausible enough. Astonished that this shy and neurotic girl was suddenly so calm and "grown up", I threw a coat over my pyjama, slipped into my shoes and hurried to the police station. It was dark outside. I saw a crowd of people in front of the building; men and women, many of them wrapped in blankets, in nightdresses or pyjamas, with tousled hair, frightened, agitated, some sobbing, others shouting and calling the names of their relatives. Some women held small children in their arms. It was cold and wet. Then I perceived the outlines of trucks, covered with tarpaulin, hovering like bleak shadows in the dark. A beam of light was cast on the dreadful scene when an SA-man stepped out of the door, followed by a group of others, bawling and slashing at those around them with rubber truncheons, loading them into the trucks. With all my might and main I battled my way towards the door and into an evil-smelling, overcrowded room, where I spotted my parents, sitting on a bench next to a door leading into a neighbouring room. Suddenly an SA-man pushed that door open and hit an old man in the face. The old man stood on the side of the door opposite to the bench, where my parents had managed to find a place to sit. The old man cried out with pain, whereupon he received another blow in the face, which was smudged with blood. When the door was opened again, and the SA-man was about to raise his hand once more to hit the old man, who was hardly able to keep standing, I saw my mother jump up

to shield him from the blow. My father also rose in an attempt to protect my mother, who stood before the old man and looked at the SA-brute in calm and fearless dignity. My heart beat wildly as I expected him to hit my mother in the face - but he suddenly let his arm sink, fixed his eyes to a sheet of paper in his hand, pushed the old man to one side and my parents to the other, waved his hand and barked: "Up to here - on the trucks; we'll collect the rest for the next transport!" At that point I managed to wangle my way through the crowd and to penetrate to my parents.

As though by a miracle we were saved once again.

That same night we left Vienna.

"Jewish Luck" was what the Soviet Jewish writer Grigori Weiss had called the circumstance that he had survived a pogrom as a small child only because a heavy stone thrown into the window had hit the pram on that day occupied by his twin sister, while it was his turn to lie on the floor..

Maybe it was a stroke of "Jewish Luck" that my parents had changed places with an old man at the police station in the attempt to protect him from further blows, landing on the side of life, whereas the poor man was condemned to be deported. Perhaps it was also "Jewish Luck", that my mother had the presence of mind to draw the blinds of our compartment as the train was about to cross the Swiss-Austrian frontier at Buchs-Feldkirch, when the Nazis boarded the train to search for any remaining passengers. They had discovered and shot four young Jews, who tried to escape to Switzerland in the guise of a band of musicians, but failed to note that our compartment was still occupied...

On the following day we arrived in Paris, completely exhausted, but relieved. We spent the night at a hotel "Milan" -not, of course, named after my father, whose first name was Milan, but after the Italian city of that name... The following day we sailed across the Channel from Boulogne to Folkstone in England.

I sat on deck, watching a magnificent sunset on a red and golden sky that reflected in the water and made the sea glitter, as though scattered with a multitude of diamonds. I wrote a long letter to Lia, in which I told her about all my experiences since our last meeting. I posted the letter in London and sent it to the address of a refugee committee in America, which I had obtained from Lia's uncle. The family had somehow managed to get to New York. My letter reached Lia, I soon received a reply, and we continued to correspond up to the year 1942. She wrote that she lived in a part of New York called the Bronx, and that she had met a "swell airman". After a last letter dated February 9th, 1942, from 2285, Andrews Ave, Morris Heights, New York, NY, I never heard from her again, and all my attempts to trace her whereabouts in later years were unsuccessful.

III- England 1938-1949

We were in England - the third station in my life.

I remember the strange feeling of moving about in an entirely new, different environment; it seemed to me that even the air had a different smell from that in Vienna, and that I had slipped into a new identity. "Winnetou" and "Agamemnon" had stayed behind; they now belonged to an irretrievable past. The first night in a strange bed with a strange scent, in a strange room, where an unaccustomed light painted unfamiliar patterns on the walls, I thought of our bedroom in Vienna, the balcony, through the open doors of which I could see from my bed the Marchfeldstrasse and the alternating warm orange and cold blue lights of the arc lamps lining the Floridsdorfer Brücke across the Danube. For some unknown reason I relived, in that first night in England, the phantasies of feverish delirium which I had when I was ill with pneumonia: half awake and half dreaming, I was haunted by the vision of my former class-mate Vilma Janitschek at the foot of my bed in Vienna, hovering beside the iron stove; I sweated with fear to

behold the terrier with the murderous eyes which I had begged my mother to remove from the lampshade, and I passed through the dark tunnel on the way to England, tormented by the feeling that I had left without saying good bye to Lia...

Paul and Marjorie Abbatt lived in a two-room flat with a small back garden in the centre of London: the address was 49, Tavistock Square, London W.C.2.

Today the house is a hotel. Marjorie - today aged over 90 - still recalls with horror, how I barged into the room, sliding over the shining, polished floor as though it were a skating rink, and how my brother and I pulled faces at the "Chippolata"-sausages she had prepared as a welcoming meal for us, which looked like -but tasted differently from the Vienna sausages we were used to...

I liked Paul and Marjorie from the first moment. Very soon a warm and close relationship developed between us - whereas the tensions between my mother and myself were increasing. I was simply unable to understand how hard life was for my mother: twice within only five years she had had to experience the disruption of her life by Nazi violence. Just when my parents had managed to lay the foundations of a hopeful life, they had had to abandon everything and then begin again at zero. Twice within five years my mother had experienced the horrors of house searches, persecution and escapes at the last moment. After we had left Vienna, it turned out that our train had been the last passenger train for some time, since prominent Nazi leaders, military personnel and material blocked civilian rail traffic.

At the time when my mother was faced with the hardship of a renewed start from scratch in a strange country, she was plagued by rheumatism, which almost paralysed her periodically. After a short while in England, a well meaning dentist thought that the pains could be relieved by the removal of all her teeth. My mother, still young and pretty, not only narrowly escaped bleeding to death, but also had serious depressions after the operation - and the rheumatism continued to torment her for many years to come. Naturally all

this had undermined my mother's health and ruined her nerves; no wonder she was irritable, impatient and nervous. Marjorie Abbatt on the other hand was free of material burdens, happily married, and successful in her professional career. She was fond of children, but without any of her own she was able to cope with me, mustering great patience and sympathetic understanding. My brother, kind, gentle and tolerant, was never such a problem to my mother as his unruly and stubborn sister, and his relationship with the Abbatts was not quite the same. I was rather spoiled by my "second parents", and unjust and hard as children often tend to be, I compared Marjorie with my mother as she was at that time, and from my point of view the comparison was to the disadvantage of my mother. My father had always been my best friend; since my mother was the one to cope with the practical side of our life, my father was free to devote all his energies to his scientific work and studies, to his political activities and to the moral and intellectual education of his children. His nerves were far less strained than those of my mother, and in addition he had a sunny nature. Although of brilliant intellect, my father was rather helpless and impractical in matters of daily life. One day he put on an apron, resolved to do an exceptional good deed by washing the dishes. When my mother returned from her shopping, she noted with dismay, that broken glass was scattered in the washing-up bowl and all around.

"Well, after all, the dirty dishes have to be sterilised, don't they?" my father tried to justify himself, as he stood there with a guilty look on his face, in his apron, with a dish cloth in his hand. To simplify matters, he had packed all the dishes into the bowl and poured boiling water over them...

I also remember an English visitor, whom my father had taken pains to entertain. When I came home from school, the man was sitting stiffly, with a polite, bitter-sweet smile in his face, in front of a cup containing a dark brown, steaming liquid. The trouble was, that my father had poured the liquid out of the bottle of cough mixture instead of taking it from the camp-coffee concentrate bottle beside it on the window sill.

In the course of the years he had become accustomed to having all practical problems cleared out of his way by my mother, so that he hardly paid attention to such trifling matters as dish-washing or serving food and drinks..

The Abbatt's flat was too small for six people, and Paul and Marjorie decided to move to their country cottage in Ibstone near High Wycombe, about an hour's car drive from London. We were allowed to stay at their flat, while my parents were looking for work and a permanent home for the family. Besides - my father had to learn English - which my mother had been taught in her early youth.

Near Tavistock Square there was a refugee centre known as "Woburn House". where many Austrian, German and Czechoslovak refugees attended English language courses.

An increasing number of refugees from Nazi occupied countries were arriving in England. After 1933 the flow was rather insignificant, but after the occupation of Austria and later on, after the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain had played Czechoslovakia into the hands of Hitler by the Munich Agreement, hundreds more Jewish and political refugees poured into Britain. Up to 1938 the refugees who came were mostly Jews with money, and a certain number of Social Democrats and other politicians, scholars, artists and intellectuals of various kinds, as well as a small number of Communists. It is estimated that up to March 1938 approximately 8000 refugees had come to Britain from Germany. On February 10th, 1938, the Convention was ratified by the League of Nations, which provided that, in accordance with the British Aliens Regulation of the year 1905, "a refugee who can prove that he is seeking admission to this country for the sole reason of escaping persecution or punishment on religious or political grounds, or because the persecution was linked with danger to his life and health and with imprisonment, must not be refused admission for reasons such as lack of financial resources or the probability that the individual asking for asylum would burden the state."

This did not alter the fact that after the occupation of Austria in March 1938 the immigration officials, who questioned those arriving, in accordance with the Aliens Act of 1920, rejected those without means of subsistence and "politically suspicious" persons, above all Communists. Many people were therefore doomed to a tragic end. Immigration became slightly easier after the occupation of Czechoslovakia and the "Kristallnacht": refugees in transit, school children and persons over sixty years of age were admitted. This practically excluded men and women aged from 16 to 60. It is known that this provision condemned to death a large number of persons in that age group threatened by the Nazis.

At the beginning of the war there were 55 000 refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia in Britain- 99 per cent of Jewish origin. Nevertheless the British authorities insisted that each refugee allowed to enter the country should be able to name individuals or organisations pledging to support them, so that the person concerned would not burden the state. In the summer of 1940 a Committee was founded, which was named after its Chairman, Lloyd Graeme, who had assumed the name of Cunliffe Lister in 1929 and was knighted as Lord Swinton. That Committee was to take charge of the growing number of immigrants. Its responsibility, however, by no means comprised the provision of funds to support the immigrants. Such funds were exclusively raised by private sources, in the first place by the Quakers and other organisations and private individuals, such as Paul and Marjorie Abbatt. The Swinton Committee merely dealt with the integration of immigrants into British society, naturally to the greatest advantage of the State.

As a consequence of the financial and political discrimination by the immigration authorities, the share of business people, artistic and academic intellectuals, members of the liberal professions and higher ranking officials among the immigrants was very considerable. The stipulations concerning work permits provided that immigrants should not be employed in the first place in accordance with their qualifications, but with requirements and vacancies on the

labour market. In artistic, academic and other better paid branches there were only a minute number of outlets, so that there was an embittered competition for such opportunities among the large number of applicants (in the media, in publishing, in research and learning for example). Those who failed to find such employment, could only find badly paid work with unfavourable conditions: in households, industry and agriculture. Especially for writers, actors, journalists, screen and stage producers, dependent on their native language this meant readjustment, which caused psychic and physical injuries and drove a considerable number of those affected to suicide.

As regards my family, we were able to move into a house after a few months, and our address there was 181, Goldhurst Terrace, London N.W.6., another landmark on my road to life. Hampstead is an area of North London, where many refugees of Jewish origin settled, some of whom have remained up to the present day.

It has hilly roads with detached and semi-detached houses, the front gardens, trees and hedges of which are speckled with bright -coloured, perfumed blossoms from early spring to late summer. On many warm days we spread out rugs and unpacked picnic baskets on the wide green expanse of Hampstead Heath, and in the winter season we rushed down the snow-covered slopes on toboggans or skis. In the evening the gentle hills overlooked a glittering sea of city lights spreading out below.

One day in our first winter at 181, Goldhurst Terrace, in 1938/39, when I went shopping with my mother on Finchley Road - a busy traffic highway of North London, I saw a young man, wearing a knitted ear-warmer of the kind popular in Austria at that time, sweeping down the hill of a side street on skis and landing with an elegant stem-turn in the main road, where he almost knocked over a long "Bobby" standing at the corner. "What the hell do you think you're doing??!! This is a busy traffic road, not a ski-run!!" said the policeman.

The skiing champion gave him a broad, charming smile, obviously not understanding a word.

"Those mad foreigners," muttered the policeman, shaking his head...

At 181, Goldhurst Terrace my mother opened a "Lunch Table" for refugees, offering continental food at low prices, where they could meet friends and discuss all their problems in their own language. The relations and conversations of these and other refugees I came across at various meeting places of immigrants, such as the "Free German League of Culture" at 36, Upper Park Road, N.W.3, or subsequently, at the Austrian Centre in Westbourne Terrace in Paddington, reflected the tensions and frictions arising from the unfulfilled, uprooted life of these men and women.

I already mentioned the "Woburn House" near the Abbatt's flat in Tavistock Square, where English language courses for refugees took place during the first months they were in the country. Around midday a gesticulating, lively crowd of them, gathered in front of the building. They included my father and a number of friends of my family, who afterwards sat around our "Lunch Table".

My father always had difficulties with the language : although he commanded a rich vocabulary and was able to render complicated English texts in excellent German, he never managed to speak English fluently and without a marked foreign accent, up to his death in 1954, when he had lived in the country for 16 years and acquired British citizenship. This led to misunderstandings- especially during the first weeks and months.

When Paul Abbatt came into the kitchen one morning to cool a cut on his finger, my father said, joking and with sympathy:

"Oh, Paul - you are now a little bloody fool!"

Whereupon Paul - generally with a sense of humour - went pale with indignation and said reproachfully: "But - Milan! I'm your friend!"

My father also caused some amusement when he entered a grocer's shop with a friendly smile, saying: "Good after-lunch!"

After weeks of letter-writing and telephone calls Paul Abbatt found good private schools which agreed to admit my brother and myself, as refugee children, free of charge.

That was how I came to "Croham Hurst School" in South Croydon, a suburb of London.

The school was in two of the detached houses on both sides of a quiet suburban road, with small, carefully-kept front gardens, a hedge, fruit trees, often in bloom very early in spring, when the air is still cold and moist, and with delicate white and pink primroses, bright yellow daffodils and sweet-scented lily-of the valley as the earth warms up. One or two cars were in the garage beside the house, and a larger garden at the back. The owners of these houses belonged to the upper middle class: higher ranking civil servants, owners of department stores, managers of banks and insurance companies, lawyers, doctors, clergymen and many well situated pensioners.

Although this type of school was only accessible to a small percentage of school youth, it exerted a decisive influence on the nature of British society for centuries, and it was the key to the best British universities - Oxford and Cambridge - and to the best paid and most prestigious positions, as well as the entrance ticket to the way to social success. Many aspects of education at such schools are well buried in the past - especially in the days when they were exclusively reserved for boys; but in changing times, when education is becoming an essential prerequisite for all who want to take an active part in political and economic life, and has been made accessible to growing numbers of male and female youth, many of its positive methods and traditions are worth preserving and developing.

Our school had a large garden, with a playground, a grass and a hard tennis court, and the girls came from families of the kind that inhabited the houses in the local area. The parents of some of them were living in the country; others were colonial officers or business people who lived abroad most of

the time; some of the parents felt that community life and education was better for their children than a life of luxury at home. The majority of the girls were at a boarding school, because their parents were unable or unwilling to take care of their children. The fees of private schools were high, but the headmistress of Croham Hurst School - CHS as we called it - a stately, cultivated and yet very motherly and warm-hearted woman, with dove-grey eyes and dark-blond hair with grey strands brushed back and tied in a bun, always admitted some girls free of charge, out of her sincere Christian convictions. To my pleasant surprise three other refugee girls turned up - all of them from Vienna and old acquaintances from Trude Frankl's "KWK".

"Wir halten fest und treu zusammen..." (we stand together firm and true,) was the refrain of the "KWK"-song; my friendship with one of those three girls - then called Susi Kalmus - has continued up to this day. These girls arrived at CHS after me. Not long before I came, a Spanish orphan of the Civil War called Isabel Luzuriaga had left, who had been there several years. Before the war foreigners were not an accepted component of the population, as they are today, when the services, shops and industry could hardly operate without them and when pupils and students of foreign origin almost dominate the scene. In this connection an episode comes to my mind which took place a few years after I had left CHS. In my student days in Oxford an African girl from Lagos, Katsina Ata, studying domestic science, told me how English people at church had reacted to her presence there. The priest at the pulpit was saying: "All men are equal before the Lord-like the sheep before their shepherd - the black ones and the white ones...", when Katsina heard whispering around her: "Look...there...a Nigger!" Outside people crowded around her, as though she was a sight-seeing object, staring and asking her questions: "Are you from Africa?" "That's right." "What do they eat in Africa?"

Katsina made a wild face, rolled her dark eyes and snapped:

"We eat people - and I'm very hungry!!"

Whereupon the crowd preferred to withdraw...

I owe a great deal to our headmistress at CHS, Miss Humphrey.

The five years I was able to spend at her school gave me a great deal that I was able to use to my advantage in my life. At CHS I once again had the experience of a good collective, in which each member was challenged and formed by the rules of human community life which had to be respected in the daily routine. All heads of schools set their individual seal on the team of their teachers and pupils.

Miss Humphrey was a member of the Society of Friends- a religious community known also as "Quakers". They do not go to church, but to their meetings, without a priest or sermon and without organ or choir music. They simply sit together, each worshipping God in his own way. If anyone feels like it, they can rise and speak or sing, they can make a statement or recite, or they can just sit in silence.

The name "Quaker" arose, when the founder of the Society of Friends, George Fox, sentenced in court to a term of 6 years in prison for blasphemy, said to the judge, that he would quake before God for this verdict. The Quakers broken away from many religious dogmas and conventions. They lived and dressed unpretentiously, rejecting titles and worldly honours, and they refused to this day to participate in war and violence. They want people to become "friends", who show respect and tolerance towards each other. They believe that all human individuals have the right to serve and worship God in their own way, and they consider it to be their duty to help others in need. For many years they were exposed to brutal persecution. Today there are Quakers all over the world.

Wherever I happened to be, I may be certain of a warm reception among Quakers as a former pupil of a Quaker school. Since their foundation, members of the Society of Friends have risked their lives to save innumerable people, including large numbers of refugees from Nazi persecution.

In conformity with her convictions as an upright member of the "Society of Friends", Miss Humphrey selected for her teaching

staff not only highly qualified specialists in their respective subjects of instruction, but individuals whose attitude to life and conduct were marked by tolerance, human understanding and an open-minded, constructive approach to world events in the past and present.

Each one of our teachers at CHS was a marked personality. This does not mean to say that they were all ideal human beings without blemish. Many of them had characteristics that made us laugh at them, or which we rejected. Miss Humphrey, for example, had something of an old maid, a certain prim and proper conventionality about her in spite of her wisdom and kindness, which many of us did not like. I always hated the raised finger attitude of a governess - in my own mother, and in all other people. Miss Humphrey, who remained unmarried up to the age of about forty and had no children, and whose private life was entirely taken up by her school and her aged mother, made great demands on us, which are hard to assert in teen-aged girls - even though they proved to be useful and important for our later life.

As a school girl of 12 I felt more like a Red Indian or Gypsy than like a well-mannered girl, and I rejected all attempts to make me respectable, well-mannered, neat, tidy, disciplined and self-controlled. I considered all these things to be superfluous and constraining like a strait-jacket, and I derived great satisfaction from shocking and provoking adults by infringing all commandments and prohibitions in that direction.

I was very quick to feel at home in the English language; above all I managed within a very short time to acquire a wealth of vulgar expressions and swear words - which I included with relish in my linguistic usage.

This did not fail to produce effects.

One day, while playing tennis, I missed a ball and lost a decisive game in a set. I commented on the situation with a juicy curse. Our mathematics teacher, Miss Ross, who happened to be on duty overheard me and said: "Mind your language - we're not in the gutter here! Go to Miss Humphrey and report your disgusting behaviour!"

I did what I was told to do, marched with a wild look off the tennis court towards the school building and knocked at the door to Miss Humphrey's office. Looking to the floor, I mumbled: "Miss Ross sent me here, because... well..because I swore on the tennis court.."

"You must not take God's name in vain, my child", Miss Humphrey said reproachfully.

Silence.

"I tend to believe that you need better spiritual care. What religion do you belong to?"

At first I wanted to reply: ' Actually I don't belong to any religion, but in Vienna I attended " HERD'"s Jewish scripture lessons, because under Schuschnigg all school children had to attend religious instructions'

But I did not say that.

It all happened quickly as lightening; the idea suddenly occurred to me: I dropped to the ground, performed the "gymnastic exercises" I had seen in films about Mohammedans in their mosque - but instead of turning eastwards I turned westwards towards the window, which offered a view of the setting sun, and said: "Allah, Allah...Hadjihalefomarbenhadjiabuabbasibnhadjidavudalgossara... ..You see, I'm a Mohammedan..."

Miss Humphrey, guided as she was by a spirit of tolerance and respect stood there and looked on full of reverence as I was seized with an apparent fit of religious frenzy. How could she have known that I had done no more than to quote the somewhat lengthy name of one of the heroes of the books by Karl May?!

"HMMMM...er...yes.. well.. go now, my child.. but you must in future guard your tongue; and, besides, swearing is really most unsuitable - especially for a little girl..."

I left the room. The bell was ringing for supper. "Old cow," I muttered to myself, irritated by the admonition that swearing was unsuitable, especially for little girls; (I never had the ambition to be girlish - even less to be lady-like). On the other hand I was amused and triumphant about the shocking

effect of my brilliant idea.

The episode had a sequel.

In the holidays which began soon afterwards, my father received a letter from Miss Humphrey. My father read it in the study of our new home. He read with a serious expression and raised eyebrows. Then he cast a questioning glance in my direction and asked: "Can you tell me, what on earth made your Miss Humphrey think that you should need... a Mullah, of all things...?!"

I said nothing.

"...Despite my utmost endeavours, it has so far been impossible for me to find a Mullah for the evidently very urgently needed care of your daughter's spiritual welfare..." my father read out to me.

I gave a brief account of the event which had obviously motivated this letter, whereupon my father broke out into a fit of laughter. He could not stop laughing for a long time and began chuckling over and over again.

"My only problem is," he said finally, "what I should write to the good woman in reply?"

He must have found some acceptable formulation in the end.

As I did not participate in the Christian scripture lessons, and since I was at war with math when I first came to CHS, I was ordered to go to Miss Ross for coaching while the others had scripture lessons.

Miss Ross - her name is that of an ancient Scottish clan, and it has no relevance to the German meaning of the word ("Ross" meaning a steed) - reminded me in some respects of a sturdy horse, when she stampeded about the place. Large, wide and hefty, with reddish, wiry hair cut into a fringe that almost covered up her steel-blue eyes, Miss Ross had a nose, which I considered might well serve as a clothes hook. In her entire appearance she was reminiscent of the geometrical figure recalled of an equilateral triangle, which broadened out from top to bottom. She trotted heavily along the passages, swaying her body, and her voice was almost like that of a man. We respected her, not only because she hissed at us at the slightest sound, and because she challenged us without mercy,

but above all because we felt that, in spite of everything else, Miss Ross was just, clever and kind-hearted. This became particularly clear to me in the course of my coaching.

When taught by the teacher we called "Knopp" in Vienna, I thought that I must be mentally deficient and incapable of ever coping in a normal way with mathematics. When I sat in an empty classroom with Miss Ross, while I could hear Miss Humphrey's voice reading from the Gospel of St. John in the neighbouring room through the open doors (it was an exceptionally hot day), the words of Miss Ross buzzed past my ears to begin with; I sat there without any interest and full of resistance, resolved to put up with the inevitable evil, and then rush out as quickly as I could to the tennis court - when suddenly the gruff deep voice penetrated to my consciousness.

"If you think I'm sitting here for my pleasure, you're mistaken, do you understand? You will now do this exercise. If you didn't listen - it's your problem. You'll sit here until it's done!" Once more she explained briefly the principle according to which the problem was to be solved, and this time I did listen - anxious to get the thing done and to get away. Miss Ross explained everything so clearly and simply, that everything appeared easy as child's play.

I knew the multiplication tables in my sleep; my mother had taken care of that in Vienna. She had tested me for hours on end, time and again. All of a sudden the whole complicated subject of mathematics seemed to me to consist of nothing but the four basic modes of calculation; all the confusing texts had to be "peeled off" and reduced to the question, which of the four basic methods - multiplication, division, addition or subtraction - or combinations of them, such as square roots, logarithms, etc. were required for each part of the problem. I grinned from ear to ear - and finished the exercise within a few minutes.

"I have no time for stupidity," said Miss Ross. "but you're not a dunce - all you need is to make a bit of an effort. Use your grey matter and concentrate. That's all. This is correct. I'll make you sweat to the last drop; you've got the gumption to

make it, if you want to..."

As though by a miracle, from that day on I no longer had any difficulties with math. I even took to liking the subject. When I no longer needed coaching, I was assigned to the kitchen to help drying the dishes while the others had their scripture lessons. The effects of this occupation, I presume, were intended to be similarly beneficial to my spiritual welfare..

Naturally we all had our favourite teachers; in my case it was Miss Pantcheva, the Latin teacher - just as in Vienna the Latin teacher we called "Die Peters" had been my favourite. Miss Pantcheva was young - hardly ten years older than her pupils. She had come to CHS directly after completing her training in Cambridge. The whole class regarded her as a friend. She taught us Latin grammar in the course of playing games we enjoyed. Like "Die Peters", Miss Pantcheva also conjured up colourful, moving images filled with life of the times of Greek and Roman antiquity; she roused our interest in the classical Greek and Roman legends and drama. Like "Die Peters", Miss Pantcheva also spoke to us about the content of the works by Homer, Euripides and Aristotle, so that we transplanted the modes of behaviour of the acting characters of their works into our own life, and the events into our own world of experiences. Miss Pantcheva never scolded or reproached us; with a subdued, mischievous sense of humour she would gently poke fun and ridicule, rather than rebuke an offender; she was a wonderful, patient listener, and could give practical advice in every situation. We all went to her with our problems, and even if she criticised us, it was never humiliating: she would point out clearly how an error had come about, so that it was easy to avoid it in future.

Once we played a game, in which each of our teachers had to be characterised in three adjectives. Miss Pantcheva was qualified as "Bright - broad minded - and cheerful". On many evenings we would gather around the big brown grand piano in the hall for a "Sing-Song", with Miss Pantcheva playing and singing with us. We had two music teachers: Miss Hyley, an elegant, silver-haired little lady with an ethereal face, who came to our

school once or twice a week to give piano lessons to advanced pupils, and to play in the dancing lessons. I always looked to Miss Hyley and her advanced pupils from afar with great admiration. The other music teacher, Miss Inglis, who lived in with us, gave us our singing lessons and was part of our daily school life. For those of us who lived at school for several years, that life was, as it were, an extension of family life, and for many girls some of our teachers were closer than their own parents.

I remember Miss Inglis with gratitude and affection, because she helped me a great deal.

Small, with a head slightly too large for her stature, grey hair worn in a style that reminded me of a wig of the time of Mozart, probably owed her first name, Hazel, to her kind hazel coloured eyes. She always reminded me of some engraved portrait of an 18th century composer. Crippled by rheumatism, she had to abandon a hopeful career as a pianist, and she dedicated all her passion for music to the development of musical talent and music appreciation in her pupils.

There were several pianos in our school. Many parents paid for their children to have piano lessons, and care was taken that they should all practise regularly. I often listened with awe when they played their pieces, and those which I liked in particular I would soon play by ear, using every opportunity to find a free piano. I particularly liked a "Cradle Song" by Balakireff, played mainly on the black keys. Once, when the girl who was learning it had her piano lesson, I hid behind the piano, watched her fingers on the keys and listened carefully to what Miss Inglis explained to her. At one point Miss Inglis looked around, as though something was wrong. She discovered one of my shoes and tugged at the leg stuck in it, and pulled me out of my hiding place. I felt most embarrassed and felt the blood rise to my head.

"Why are you squatting behind the piano?" Miss Inglis asked me in a friendly voice; "come and sit down on a chair if you want to listen!"

After the lesson she asked me, whether I could play something, and I performed the "Cradle Song" by Balakireff; in all

immodesty I must say that I was better than the girl who was learning to play it - and for whom the piano lessons and practising were only an irksome obligation, because her parents were paying for them.

From that day Miss Inglis taught me to play free of charge; unfortunately only for a year, because I had too much school work to do in order to prepare for various examinations.

Miss Balcombe - nicknamed "W.B". by generations of "Crohamians" - fascinated us by her history and geography lessons. She laid the foundations of an outlook on life, based on tolerance and a sense of fairness, a striving for critical, independent thoughts and judgement, and a sense of genuine human solidarity. She won our sympathy for men like Garibaldi, who had defended freedom and justice; she challenged us to discuss problems, and gently guided us in learning the art of democracy and despising despotism, coercion, intolerance and violence in any form. "W.B" taught us to defend our own opinion and also to listen to other views, and to respect the dignity of people even if they held opinions which we could not share, and she taught us to respect people of other nations with different customs and to despise racism.

Miss Balcombe, an imposing figure with white hair and blue eyes, was no longer young even at the time she taught my own generation. Her entire life was associated with the school. Up to her death, at the age of 97, - she edited the school newspaper. She remembered nearly all the names of her pupils in the course of more than half a century, knew what each one was doing, corresponded with them, and was visited up to the last days by former pupils who came to see her from all corners of the world.

It was "W.B." who organised our regular "School Parliaments" - a genuine school of democracy, civil courage and tolerance. These events were modelled after the British Parliament: we had to represent the different political parties, state their position and try to convince the others of the correctness of our own point of view. This taught us to work out logical documents, with arguments substantiated by facts which we had

to compile and arrange, and we learned to speak freely in public.

I had represented the Communist Party at a school parliament. My father, whom I consulted during the holidays in preparing for the event to take place at the beginning of the new term, took the matter very seriously. He supplied me with documentation and instructions on "strategy and tactics" for my "parliamentary speech". I studied with the utmost zeal, and with far more thoroughness than in preparing for examinations. Following my father's advice, I only asked to take the floor after all the other parties had made their statements, carefully noting all their contradictions and unsubstantiated arguments. I had very much more substantiated facts, information and logical arguments to offer than any of the others, and won an unusual and unexpected success. "If I did not know that Communism was quite different in practice than in theory, I would now vote for the Communists", several teachers said to me in all earnestness. My success went to my head; I founded a "Party"- and did all sorts of nonsense in its name...

In her imaginative geography lessons "W.B." told us about the great explorers who had investigated the secrets of the Arctic ice, the deserts and tropical rain forests, recommended books on these subjects, and stimulated our interest in the life of the inhabitants of these regions; she never referred to them as "natives" and spoke with respect and admiration of their strength, persistence and skill and inventiveness in the constant struggle to survive in extremely hard conditions. In this way each of our teachers had left their mark on our way to adult life, providing us with equipment to cope with all difficulties and to find our way; to cross wild rivers and and to take the right direction at cross roads.

Every day we went for long walks across fields and woods; we played tennis and lacrosse. At the end of each term we performed dances and plays, the rehearsals of which we greatly enjoyed.

Before and after every meal Miss Humphrey said a short prayer. On week days there was a morning service in the hall,

when a pupil accompanied the singing on the piano. These hymns are very melodious and enjoy great popularity in England, so much so that they have almost become folk songs. They are sung on many occasions, not only at religious services. On Sunday mornings everybody went either to church or to meeting, and I either buried myself in a book or found a piano to play on in peace and quiet.

On Sunday afternoon we attended "Sunday Music", a regular feature, in which a different dormitory could select the records to be played. The school owned a comprehensive record collection, and as we listened, knitting, sewing, embroidering or crocheting, we became acquainted with a very wide range of classical music of many countries of the past and present. After supper on Sundays we collected around Miss Humphrey, who would read to us from various books- I remember in particular books by Hilaire Belloc, John Buchanan, John Bunyan...

Several months passed in this way at CHS in South Croydon, Surrey.

The summer of 1939 was hot and sunny.

In that summer our parents received a letter from Miss Humphrey, asking them to consider whether they would allow their children to return to school before the end of the summer holidays, to assist in converting into a school an old country manor house in the South of England, which Miss Humphrey had bought from a bankrupt descendant of the family of the poet William Blake. The world situation, Miss Humphrey wrote, had dramatically deteriorated. If a war broke out, our school would be safer in Somerset than in the immediate vicinity of the airbase in South Croydon near London.

My parents agreed to send me, and so I arrived at "Bridge House", South Petherton, Somerset, at the end of August 1939. Several teachers and girls were there when I came. The house was on a large landed estate, in a landscape of rolling green hills and fields. It was a characteristic country manor house, with many rooms and passages. The rooms were very spacious and had high ceilings, large windows - and had accumulated appalling quantities of dirt and dust. Spider

webs were hanging about everywhere. The whole house had a smell of rot, like in a humid cellar. It was cold and damp inside, even in hot summer weather outside. Frequently shrieks could be heard, as somebody had been frightened by a mouse or rat jumping out from behind a dusty curtain or a box. We strolled through the house to look around, discovered more and more rooms and wondered how this decrepit building, which looked to us more like a haunted castle, should ever be turned into a school. At first it was not fit for human habitation. During the day we were busy scrubbing, cleaning, tidying, painting; at night we moved to our billets at the large farm house of a woman with the stature of an Amazon by the name of Mrs. MacDougall-Porter. While we were sitting around the long table of plain wood having breakfast, she paced in dignified pose up and down her vast kitchen, and told us the same story every day, in a mighty voice coming out of the depth of her large tummy: "Well, you know... in those days I was THEEE Channel swimmer; they rubbed me with grease, from a boat that went with me my dear friend, Mrs. Sidebottom (she pronounced the name "Siddebottome") handed me food and drink on the way.... It was a very long way - just imagine - from England to France! Take a look at the map, and you will appreciate my performance!"

She loved it when we listened every morning, as though with tense interest and admiration, interspersing her account with noises of astonishment and wonder. Those who acted that part most convincingly could hope to receive a second helping - which was desirable, since the physical work and fresh air stimulated a healthy appetite.

Then, one day, we heard news none of us could understand: Stalin had concluded a non-aggression pact with Hitler!! How could that have happened? Hitler was a Nazi criminal, hardly to be trusted; least of all, so one would imagine, could the Soviet Communists trust the word of Hitler, their most deadly enemy! Had Hitler not loudly proclaimed, only a few years ago, that he would respect the sovereignty of Austria, and then, not long after that statement, he had invaded the country...

In those days my father and Paul Abbatt were calming down many dismayed people, who out of indignation about such an act wanted to leave the Communist Party. The two had explained to me at the time, that diplomacy and politics were like a complicated game of chess, Stalin needed time to prepare for the war, which was then already recognised as inevitable. Paul and my father said that this move should in no case be regarded as though Stalin had suddenly made friends with Hitler, he merely wanted to gain time.

I accepted that explanation as a convincing argument. Our teacher of German, Fräulein Freudenberg, a German refugee, said one morning, with tears streaming down her face, that she had just heard on the radio that the Nazis had invaded Poland.

Two days later England was at war with Hitler-Germany. I had read and heard a great deal about wars, and I imagined that it was a condition in which shots were fired and bombs exploded - something like the scenes I had seen in films about Spain during the Civil War. I was afraid of the war - but at the same time I was curious to know what it would really be like: perhaps it would mean that many countries would at last get together and chase Hitler out of Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

During the first weeks of the war, above all in the quiet country environment of Somerset, the days after the declaration of war were no different from the days before. The teachers and Miss Humphrey were saying that Britain was now heading for hard times, and that we would have to accept without grumbling any additional demands made on us, we would have to think in the first place of the defence of the country and try to make the best possible contribution. We listened to these words, but did not let them disturb our life in any way; what did we know in those days about the true meaning of the word "war"?

"Bridge House" was ready for us to move in within a few weeks. Some time was to pass, however, before it became more or less habitable. At first our beds were damp and cold, and we huddled together to get warm. After a while we all had our hot water bottles, which every night before going to bed we filled

up with hot water out of a large kettle standing on the huge stove, heated with coal and wood, in the kitchen. The beds were very uncomfortable. At first we had to sleep on straw - sacks called 'paliasses'. They were hard and prickling - and alive. The fleas had a good time playing about in the straw and feasting on us. During the first weeks there was only cold water for washing and after a night in a clammy, cold, prickly, flea-ridden bed the cold wash was most unpleasant. After a while we were given better mattresses and warm water. We became accustomed to our new environment, and when the spring came, when the air was filled with the scent of fresh grass and blossoms and the chirping of birds, it was pleasant to be living in the country. On sunny Sundays we used to spread out rugs on the grass to read, to chatter, or we played tennis. Some girls had their own horses sent to them, as there was enough space for riding.

We grew up.

Since no boys were about, specific friendships sprang up among the girls - which in some cases ended in lesbianism. We also had our "idols" among the teachers - who reacted with tactful understanding and common sense, and tried to direct things into "normal" channels. In this respect a helping hand was given in the first place by Miss Pantcheva, and another very young teacher, Miss Miller - who taught us English language and literature, also a Cambridge graduate, a quiet, slight, ethereal creature, with a brown wreath of curls rolled in around her head, a high forehead, and large, brown, dreamy eyes. We also found a pillar of moral support in the matron, Mabel Waite, a motherly, cheerful Welsh woman, with dimples in her cheeks when she laughed, and who always managed without too many words to dispel dejected and morose moods with her unsentimental, practical wisdom. If one of us came in tears, with a bleeding teen-age heart, to Miss Miller or Miss Pantcheva, she would be patiently heard; we were told, in such cases, that at our age everything in us was heavily burdened by the process of growth and change inside us, that our "sufferings" were quite natural phenomena which we had to live

and cope with. We were above all taught the worth of self-control, to appreciate that quality, and to disdain its absence and the display of uncontrolled emotions. Miss Pantcheva and Miss Miller used every opportunity in their lessons to make us recognise the petty nature and dimension of the "sufferings" of well cared for, well nourished teen-agers, compared to the immense real tragedies taking place all over the world at the same time as we were melting with self-pity over some ridiculous trifle. They gave us visual accounts of the destinies of children of our age and younger, orphaned by the war, left hungry and homeless from one moment to the next after a bomb had crashed down and destroyed their sheltered childhood at one blow. Or they would read newspaper reports about the horrors to which people in the Nazi-occupied countries were exposed, and which made us feel ashamed about our own petty and ridiculous hysterics. I clearly remember, how on one such occasion Miss Pantcheva said to me: "Don't take yourself quite so seriously - you're not so important! Think more about others than about yourself, and always remember: those who don't manage to control themselves will certainly be controlled by others!"

Words similar to those which my father had said to me on that excursion to the Vienna woods, when he had insisted that I should learn to overcome fatigue, hunger and thirst...

In those days I was immersed in books and music in every spare moment, which saved me a great many teen-age pains.

When the rubbish collectors or any other male creatures turned up in the school grounds, everyone dashed to the windows, and there were enraptured cries from all sides: "Oh, look!... over there... a man!"

And when a unit of French soldiers was stationed in the village not far from "Bridge House", we all ran wild. The young Frenchmen soon discovered that there was a girls' school nearby, and on some mild summer evenings they would creep up to our fence. The territory at the back of the house, near the tennis courts, was overgrown with weeds, thistles and stinging nettles in the tall grass, with a chicken house in the middle. Miss Humphrey had bought some chickens and hired

a gardener to cultivate a vegetable plot, so that we should be self-supporting in meat, eggs and vegetables. This proved to be an act of wise foresight. The hens laid their eggs with preference into the stinging nettles. We had made this discovery, rummaging in the grass and nettles with a tennis racket in an attempt to retrieve a tennis ball.

In one moonlit summer night the idea came to us to search for such eggs, and to have a romantic, secret nocturnal meal of eggs in the garden. One girl found an old spirit stove on a rubbish heap waiting to be collected. I pinched a bit of spirit, some margarine for frying, and a bit of salt from the kitchen. We waited until the teacher on duty had said "good night", closed the door and disappeared. Then we took some sheets from the beds, tied their ends firmly together, and let ourselves glide down into the garden, clinging to the sheet-ladder, which we had tied around the wood between the windows. The dormitory was fairly close to the ground. Outside the crickets and night birds were chirping, the slender crescent moon hung in the dark universe, and a scent of fresh earth was in the air. We crept to the cloakroom to get our gum-boots, put them on, and, in nightdresses or pyjamas, gum boots and gloves we plunged into the stinging nettles. Armed with sticks and a torch we carefully poked and combed through the grass and nettles and soon discovered quite a number of eggs. Then we dug out the spirit cooker and an old frying pan, also retrieved from the rubbish heap, and then concealed under fallen leaves behind the chicken house, and the meal was prepared. Before we had climbed out of the window, we had thrown a few rugs out to sit on. I never enjoyed a meal of fried eggs as much as this - although the butter and the bread, which we had salvaged the night before from leftovers destined to feed the chickens fell rather short of satisfying our appetites. Suddenly we heard whispering and soft whistling. Three French soldiers stood at the fence. At first we wanted to run away - but then the temptation was too great. The whole affair was quite harmless, but we felt happy and elated. Since that night we all had a "real boy-friend" for a few weeks - the best thing that could happen to us. We felt

like filmstars in a romantic picture. Our Frenchmen came to see us quite frequently - for nocturnal fried-egg parties and to flirt with us. They were all still quite young and smooth-faced like boys, shy, and spoke very little English. We spoke even less French. Mlle. Charbonneau, our French teacher, was astonished about the unaccustomed zeal shown by some of us for a time in her lessons, and about the surprising progress we made. She was above all astonished about our abundant reservoir of "popular" - i.e. vulgar and indecent - words which we commanded all of a sudden; until, after a short time, our boy-friends were transferred to a different place. There were tears, heart-rending scenes of parting, then a few letters.

The adventure was never revealed. Only the sudden enthusiasm for learning French quickly died down...

In our first winter at "Bridge House" the Russian-Finnish war broke out. It was in the focus of many talks, and it was also discussed in class.

On December 3rd, 1939 I found a letter from my father on the long mantelpiece in the hall, where the mail was always laid out twice a day. That letter is in front of me on my desk today, half a century later.

"...I now have to work much harder to earn as much as I did before," my father wrote. "That is the war. Pay is decreasing, prices are rising. It was the same in the First World War, and it will be so in many other wars. There will always be people who will gloat over wars, because they make money on the sale of arms... You asked me, what I have to say about the things happening at present. In Finland there is a government, which had everything destroyed which was in the least democratic - in 1919, and later with the aid of the German fascists and reactionaries. The "Times" wrote the other day, that the Finnish government had massacred 30000 workers on that occasion. The operation was directed by a man named Mannerheim. He had called the German specialist on manslaughter von der Goltz to help him - and then free Finland was annihilated.

Then the Russians, in an effort to protect their frontiers , took up negotiations with the Finns, (aware that this was inevitable, since the French and the English refused to join them in an alliance). That same Mannerheim, who had so many innocent people murdered, proved to be a sworn enemy of the Russians. Finnish guns were stationed along all the approach roads to Leningrad in a way which no other state would have tolerated. The situation is very dangerous for the Russians. They have just begun to recover to some extent, after the revolution and the civil war, and renewed clouds are gathering all around them. So they banged with their fist on the table: That's enough!

All defence measures cost a lot of money, strength and blood, but in the present war conditions in the world there is no margin for idle talk.

This much for your orientation.

I can only tell you that, wherever the Russians may turn up, there won't be massacres of Jews and Communists - and if a few rogues are deprived of their booty, no one will suffer too much..."

That was in December 1939.

The opinion expressed by my father in that letter was shared at the time by many people. His confidence in the Soviet Union was deep-rooted, and he brought me up in that faith, which was perhaps stronger than any religious belief; the "Gods" in this case, were human beings of flesh and blood. My father died in 1954. He did not live to see the revelations of the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU in 1956, nor the collapse of the Socialist countries and of Communism, in which he had so firmly believed, thirty years later

At our school everyone was busy knitting: gloves, mittens, shawls, Balaclavas - for "Mannerheim's heroes", as they said. The official view was disseminated at our school, according to which the "powerful Russians" had aggressively attacked the "brave little Finns".

That official view angered me - after what I had heard from my father and Paul Abbatt. So I sat down to knit a Balaclava-

announcing with a firm resolve that my knitting was for a soldier of the Red Army.

There are no words to describe the tears and sweat knitted into this "work of art" -for which I was abused as a "traitor" and boycotted as a "Red criminal". Nor was knitting one of my favourite occupations. I made many mistakes, but finally the product was finished. It looked rather miserable -black, crumpled and full of mistakes, but my mother corrected the worst mistakes, washed it and packed the white, fluffy Balaclava into scented paper -together with a sheet of music paper, on which I had written a composition of my own, with the aid of Miss Inglis, entitled "Ballad of Russia". I even played that composition at a school concert. The recognition I won at that recital, perhaps also partly combined with respect for my stubborn persistence in the resistance against the "Mannerheim-Adherents", compensated me to some extent for the humiliations experienced.

The small parcel was addressed to Mrs. Maisky, the wife of the Soviet ambassador, following the advice of Paul Abbatt, who went with me to hand it over personally at the Soviet Embassy in London. A few days later - we had just returned to school after the Christmas holidays - some girls told me that there was a big and rather unusual envelope addressed to me waiting with the letters on the mantelpiece in the hall. It was from the Soviet Embassy. As I opened it with shaking hands, I was surrounded by girls who had seen the letter before me. Mrs. Maisky thanked me for my parcel, writing that my Balaclava would certainly warm the head and heart of a young Red Army soldier, fighting in the freezing cold to ensure that all children should be able to sleep peacefully, and to prevent a fatal spreading of the war to the whole world. She also thanked me for the music. "Always remember - talent alone is not enough! You will have to work very persistently and hard to master the great art of music. You are still young - make use of your youth!"

These words reinforced my determination to become a composer and conductor. In a discussion in the "family council" about my future, I was furious when my father said to me: "Above all

you should remain standing with your feet on the ground and see the world as it is; up to now, whether you like it or not, it is a world dominated by men; apart from the fact, that making a living on art of any kind - for men, and all the more so for women... You must never, under no circumstances, allow yourself to depend on others for a living! You should therefore select a profession which will give you a chance to be financially independent, in any country, in any social system. There are plenty of mediocre artists, musicians and writers. You don't need to fill up their ranks. If you are really good enough, you will assert yourself. If not - you just were not good enough!"

I appreciated and heeded my father's words; but only very much later. At the moment when he said them to me, I was angry and felt insulted...

During the war I lived in two different worlds: on the one hand the peaceful life of the English upper middle class in a country manor house, and at home, during school holidays, the uprooted and insecure life of refugees, with all the tensions and constraints of that life.

The holidays, of course, took up less time than school life - which was, therefore, the most important factor in my life at that period. Whereas before, in Vienna, and, of course, in my early childhood in Berlin, my life at home with the family was closest to me, and that was mainly where I felt I belonged; things had changed from the moment I was at CHS, where I lived most of the time, where I slept and ate and spent my leisure - with the other girls and our teachers, who were our main "adult authority", factor of influence and communication. That community of fellow-pupils and teachers was, for the largest part of the year, our family and our home.

During the school holidays the situation was "exceptional" - especially as we had no real "family home" over several years. Apart from the short time just before the war at Goldhurst Terrace in London, our family lived as sub-tenants in temporary substitute homes. My brother at his boarding school far away had an entirely different life, and since he

did not share my interests in political activities in the Austrian Youth Organisation and the refugee club, we were not particularly close even in the short holiday periods when we were with the family.

My mother was overworked, full of various kinds of sorrows and anxieties and financial worries, she was nervous, tired, and there was tension also between my parents, so that, in fact, I felt more at home at school. There I learned my lessons, moved up into the next higher grade, strolled with the other girls and with our teachers across the spacious green fields, climbed across the gates put up to keep the cattle and sheep herds together. I played tennis and lacrosse, and in the autumn we went out with baskets and ladders to collect blackberries, which were delivered to the school kitchen, where they were made into stew, jam, or used for puddings or cakes under the strict supervision of our chief cook, Miss Crockford, a friend of our math mistress, Miss Ross. Miss Crockford, humorous and kind, despite her gruff voice and outer appearance of an old battle axe, with a mop of flying grey hair, a similarly clattering, yellow set of false teeth, and an even longer and bonier structure. Miss Crockford efficiently cared for our food and drink, allocating the supplies available to her with thrifty and resourceful management. She provided us with adequate and healthy food, even in the hardest years of the war. She always had ideas how to add variety to the menu. Swarms of rooks and crows were fluttering and croaking around the old oak, ash and chestnut trees in the grounds of "Bridge House" at all times of the year, and Miss Crockford prepared rook-pie for us at least once or twice a week from the birds which the gardener shot down. On the days we had rook-pie, we gnawed and scratched the scarce bits of meat from the miriads of tiny bones that swam in the gravy, and which I thought was rather similar in taste to chicken meat.

Our participation in the "national war effort" in those days took place in various forms. We were assigned work in the kitchen, helping to dry the dishes, cleaning the chicken house and other services. The chicken house also threatened us

as atonement for various sins.

"W.B." one day had the idea that, according to its historic situation, the school very probably stood on the territory of an ancient Roman road, and one form of our "war service" work then for a time consisted in a campaign under the heading "Digging for Victory". Spurred on by fascinating accounts in our history lessons, about excavations in which valuable finds were made, we burrowed in the soil on many afternoons, clad in mackintoshes and gum boots, splashed and smudged with mud, and all the time one of us would come running up to Miss Balcombe with some fragment of an assumed valuable archaeological find - which turned out to be a bit of a broken beer bottle or an old flowerpot.

The war, at that stage, was still very remote from us; we only heard on the radio about Dunkirk, the fall of Paris, and about the invasion of one European country after another. In the days after the occupation of France the war became tangible reality for me - not so much during my days at school, in our rural "ghost-castle", which, in the meantime, had become a comparatively well equipped boarding school, where we even managed to give temporary accommodation to girls from another evacuated school, who were waiting to move into a new school building. I became more immediately aware of the war above all during the school holidays, in my "second life" at home in London, as part of the refugee community.

In September and October 1940 the air-raids on the British capital began. Even today cold showers run down my back, at the sound of the sirens of a factory near my home around midday...

It is hard to convey an idea of the feeling of paralysing fear at the sound of the sirens howling to announce an air-raid warning during the war, when everyone was looking up to the sky, from where the ominous droning of the heavy "Messerschmidt"-bombers was coming closer. The greatest horror was the whistling of the falling bombs, the seconds of waiting for the bomb to strike, not knowing whether it would hit you and turn the place that had been your home up to that moment into a heap of burning rubble, and maybe extinguish your own

life within an instant.

In the garden of our house in Goldhurst Terrace there was one of the little corrugated iron huts, dug into the earth up to the roof, called "Anderson-Shelter": a small family air-raid shelter, named after Sir John Anderson, the British Home Secretary at the time, who had introduced them. I do not know whether that hut would have saved us, had we been at home at the time when a landmine ripped open the entire side of our street where our house had stood. In that air-raid 181 Goldhurst Terrace, together with most other houses on that side of the road were reduced to rubble and ashes. At the time this happened we had luckily left London and had moved to Oxford.

Once again my parents had lost all they had shortly after a new start....

At the beginning of the war there were a number of new features in our daily life. which I perceived above all during the holidays. Many schools had been evacuated from the big cities to the country, like CHS. Food rationing cards were introduced, and men and women in uniform had become part of the street panorama.

From my earliest childhood I had learned to hate people in uniforms, to keep out of their way and to mistrust them. In Berlin and in Vienna under the Nazis this had good reasons, and it was confirmed by experience. Yet these men and women in British Forces uniforms belonged to an entirely different category: the media presented them to us as our defenders in the war against the German Nazis, who had also caused suffering to my own family. I saw the home guards in operation by day and by night, saving people from burning ruins of bombed buildings at the risk of their own lives, clearing rubble, comforting and helping people who had been bombed out and lost their families and homes. They were always friendly in dealings with the population. Even in tragic circumstances they never lost their sense of humour and optimism, despite their worn faces; this gave me a different attitude towards people in uniform.

Silvery barrage balloons , which looked like the Zeppelins I remembered from the time in Berlin, were floating over London; they formed a defence line in the air against approaching enemy aircraft. Air-raid shelters were built everywhere. Windows were stuck up with strips of paper ,and a black-out after dark was imposed. People had to queue up for many things -also for the issue of ration cards and gas masks, which we were obliged to carry with us at all times. My mother, practical as she always was, immediately began to sew fancy gas mask bags out of bright coloured oil cloth on her old "Singer" sewing machine. She quickly found interested buyers, and the money she received for the sale of these bags helped to contribute to the family budget in times when my father was earning very little.

Gas masks had become part and parcel of life, and a component of the war-vocabulary - like the terms "ration card", "A.R.P." (air raid precaution), "Home Guards" (civilian war service volunteers), "utility" (low-priced consumer goods of exclusively practical use value in quality and design, devoid of any luxury elements), "refugee" (immigrants from Nazi - occupied countries), and then "internment" and "enemy aliens". Austrian and German refugees, including children of my age, were declared to be "enemy aliens" when the war broke out. This was devoid of logic, and I was angry and indignant about this injustice. How could anti-fascists, who had fought against Hitler even before 1933, such as my family, be mentioned under the same breath as the Nazis? After all, we too were at war with the Nazis -and with very much clearer motivations than the British Forces members!

In fact the most consistent among the combatants against Hitler - the Communists - were suddenly denounced in the press and radio as the last scum...

The Aliens' Regulations of 1920 were augmented by provisions stipulating the imprisonment of foreigners in the case of "endangering public safety and in defence measures calling for their internment". The discrimination against German and Austrian refugees as "enemy aliens" was no less humiliating than the discrimination practised by the Nazis against

anti-fascists and Jews.

All immigrants older than 16 years of age had to face a tribunal of investigation and classification into one of three categories - A, B and C. My parents were summoned to face such a tribunal at the end of 1939. The classification depended on the mercy of the respective justice of the peace and the degree of his hostility towards foreigners. Although my father was a Communist, my parents were lucky to be classified into category "C" - as opponents of Hitler and as "loyal" to the host country. Most of the refugees were assigned to that category. They were obliged to give up radios and geographical maps in their possession, to stay at home after the curfew hour every evening, and to report every absence from their place of permanent residence to the police. Category B comprised people very arbitrarily considered to be "dubious elements" (e.g. known Communist party officers or persons suspected of "subversive Communist activities"). My father was also interned, despite his category C status; for several months he was at an internment camp on the Isle of Man. For my mother this was a renewed disaster: separation from her husband, uncertainty about his fate, and the need to cope with all problems alone.

Without the assistance of our friends my mother would hardly have known how to manage.

Soon it became known that internees were being deported to Canada and Australia, and my mother had sleepless nights with anxiety and fear that my father might be among them. Often I saw her in the morning with red, swollen eyes. Seven thousand refugees were deported to Canada and Australia, together with German prisoners of war in June 1940. We heard a lot of complaints about conditions at the internment camps: overcrowded accommodation, bad food, thieving and humiliations of the internees by their guards..

Soon we were informed by press and radio reports and in talks at my mother's "Lunch Table", that prominent British personalities- among them the writer and historian H.G. Wells - and organisations had criticised the internment policy of the government. That criticism became particularly sharp after the

"Arandora Star", a ship deporting refugees, was sunk by German submarines. The mood of the British public, until shortly before whipped up by the media to violent hatred of foreigners, at that time radically changed.

By the end of 1941 most of those interned had been released. My father was back home after a few months, before the first major air-raids on London, when we moved to Oxford.

There we first lived as sub-tenants in a semi-detached house belonging to a Mrs. Tyrrell. Her husband was in the air force. In those days I felt particularly aware of the "English life" at school and the "refugee life" during the holidays at home: on the one hand the peaceful routine of the British Christian upper middle class, distinguished by a refined language, the fostering of traditions of British and world culture and British customs; in a climate of political liberalism, and humanism, with deeper roots in the 19th than in the 20th century, as reflected in works of writers like Galsworthy or C.P. Snow, such as the "Forsyte Saga" or "Strangers and Brothers".

That life was governed by the idea of tolerance, justice and the concept of the "freedom of the individual". In all lessons at school these concepts were held high and substantiated by concrete examples, practically demonstrated by the relations between teachers and pupils and reaffirmed by regular features of school life, such as the reading recitals on Sunday evenings or Sunday Music, and the relevant commentaries of our teachers. These concepts exerted a lasting influence on our entire development and subsequent life.

Yet it should be noted, that our teachers, and the circles of society to which they belonged, considered the high ideals which they upheld and in the spirit of which they educated us as abstract concepts and general principles, rather than as part of the reality of practical daily life.

That reality also included, for example, that I was ordered to appear, at the age of 16, before a tribunal of the kind my parents and all other refugees from Nazi persecution had to face, in order to be classified as "enemy" or "friendly" alien. I was accompanied by Miss Hutchings, a teacher with very

marked moral principles, but rather of the abstract kind. For me the procedure was extremely unpleasant and, as I stood there before those aloof men in black robes, throned on a platform high above from which they looked down on me disdainfully, I felt like a criminal about to be sentenced. Asked about my plans for the future, I said that I intended to go to the university after matriculation; thereupon one of the gentlemen asked me in a jeering tone of voice, whether I was not aware that higher education cost a lot of money, I replied: "You need money or knowledge, and knowledge can be acquired, if money is short". In spite of that reply I was classified in category C as a "friendly alien".

Returning to school, Miss Hutchings observed that she had felt "quite faint with horror" at my "impudence", whereas it would have been suitable for me to have behaved with "humble modesty", and that she was "more than astonished" about the "benign decision" of the tribunal...

The revolution in Russia in 1917, contrary to the French Revolution, which belonged to a period in the historic past, was part of contemporary events, having taken place only a quarter of a century before, and with very concrete effects on current world events. The French Revolution was remote enough to allow enthusiasm about its ideals. The October Revolution, or the atrocities of Nazi concentration camps belonged to the present - they were subjects which, according to the elegantly tripping Mr. Mackintosh, were not discussed at table.

That gentleman was engaged by Miss Humphrey to instruct us once a month in the art of well-mannered behaviour under the motto: "Manners Maketh Man". Many things he taught us were undoubtedly of use in our subsequent life; others only made us laugh; which we did.

This creature - tall and slender, a grey phenomenon, with egg-shaped head, covered with grey bristles of hair, wing-shaped, narrow brows over a pair of piercing, dark bird's eyes and a small pursed mouth, so red and heart-shaped that we were convinced that he used lipstick - would dance into the classroom like a ballerina. Basically he did not bother me too

much; he was only a nuisance in so far as he picked on me as an example to visualise how things should NOT be done. He often ordered me to leave the room for "ill-mannered conduct", crowing: " OUT!", with outstretched arm and forefinger in the direction of the door. On one occasion he elucidated -pointing at me - that it was " improper", especially for a lady, carefully to scrape the plate clean. "It is seemly always to leave bits of the food on the plate". he said in a pedantic lisp.

Not long before I had read in the journal "Soviet War News", to which my father subscribed, reports about freezing, hungry children in Nazi- occupied territories and concentration camps.

"Children in Russia and Poland are starving - and we are asked to leave good food on the plates, which is then thrown away or fed to the hens???!!" I dared to remark with indignation - whereupon I was ordered to disappear in the direction of the stretched-out arm...

Laughing and crying, said Mr. Mackintosh, were both harmful to the looks of "growing ladies"; these "displays of emotion" would cause ugly wrinkles. "Smile...always just gently smile", he recommended to us. "And just once take the trouble of looking at your face in vulgar distortions when you laugh or cry!!"

In the first weeks and months in Oxford in Mrs. Tyrrell's house, I did not feel much like laughing or smiling. After the nights of bombing in London it was always a relief to be able to sleep in peace at "Bridge House". The nights in Oxford in our first accommodation were not much more pleasant than those in London ; they were only less dangerous.

I had to share a bedroom with Miss Kate, the prototype of an elderly spinster. Apart from the circumstance that the bed assigned to me was narrow and hard, the lady snored like a saw-mill, and besides she had a weak bladder.. Since she did not feel like getting out of bed at night to run out of the room and up the stairs to the lavatory - it was evidently always an urgent matter - she used to pull a pot out from under her bed with scraping, splashing noises several times

each night, and I awoke from clattering. thumping and a nasty smell, after which it was hard to go back to sleep; especially since Miss Kate had a panicky fear of a draught...

The stay in that house was only bearable for me because, as soon as my unpleasant bedroom mate was out of the house, I rushed to the piano standing in the rarely used sitting room, playing to my heart's content - although the instrument was out of tune and damaged, with some keys getting stuck all the time from the damp in the room, where it served simply as a piece of furniture.

It was also an unexpected pleasure, when a girl in the navy blue uniform and hat of an Oxford girls' school suddenly stopped her bicycle and fell around my neck in the street, and I recognised Gitta Margulies, one of my "blood-sisters" of the "LGGE"-League at the Schwarzwaldschule in Vienna. Gitta had come to England with a childrens' transport. A childless couple, Mr. and Mrs. Alden, who owned the shop at the market where my mother used to buy her meat all the years she lived in Oxford, had adopted her and given her the care of a loving family.

Together with Gitta and other young people of my age, I frequented the "Refugee Club" at St. Philipp's and St. James's Church Hall in North Oxford, often referred to as "Phil and Jim", which a local vicar had made available to the refugees. Every Saturday interesting events took place there - lectures, concerts and recitals - by distinguished artists and scholars living in Oxford as refugees. We also attended regular meetings of the Free Austrian Youth (FÖJ) at a refugee hostel in New Inn Hall Street in the centre of Oxford. There as well I was aware of the stark contrast between my "English school life" and the life of the "continental refugees". Whereas most of my schoolmates at CHS came from well situated families, in whose homes they spent their holidays, the refugees in the circle of my parents and friends at the Club lived a life of displaced persons, many of them, like my family, as sub-tenants, in constant battles with despotic "landlords" and nagging "landladies", with no opportunities to find work in their own professions, forced to perform badly

paid and unaccustomed work and always tormented by financial worries. Many did not know whether their relatives left behind in Germany, Austria or Czechoslovakia were still alive and whether they would ever see them again. These factors burdened their nerves, and there were frequent frictions and quarrels among them.

During the holidays, in my "refugee life" I could not fail to note a number of more unpleasant aspects of life in England - namely those reserved to people with little money. The upper sections of these underprivileged classes is the "Eldorado of the common man": those who strive to imitate the life-style of the "top élite" - only with a small (or without) a bank account: people living in the rows of little semi-detached houses, like that of Mrs. Tyrrell: with a small front garden, unused drawing rooms with polished, unused pianos - damaged and out of tune from the damp and cold, with a bowl of wax fruit on a lace tray-cloth placed on top; dark kitchens, smelling of breakfast kippers; bigoted spinsters pouring cheap perfume over their unwashed bodies; who go to church on Sunday to hear the latest gossip and to gloat over the misfortunes of others... Stupidity, a lack of culture and education and narrow-minded chauvinism mark the features of that large section of the population, which belongs to the staunchest supporters of Conservative governments in Britain up to the present day.

At the lower end of this section there are slums, filth, despair, despondency, crudeness and crime...

During my school holidays I ploughed through "Soviet War News" and "Soviet Weekly", which my father subscribed to. I read there about the fate of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, Oleg Koshewvoi and Alexander Matrossov - young people of my age and younger, who had been bestially murdered as Resistance fighters against the Nazis. I read about the indescribable sufferings of the inhabitants of Nazi-occupied countries; about the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Maidanek; about the Ghetto rising of the Jews in Warsaw. I also read reports, in the press publication "Allies Inside Nazi Germany", issued by German refugees, about the resistance in Germany, by a very small

number of people in unimaginably difficult and dangerous conditions. On long winter evenings my father often told us about life in the internment camp - about potato-peeling, long times of standing for roll-call in heat, rain and cold; punishments for offences not committed; thieving by the guards, who were not punished; of depression and despair; but also about brilliant concert, theatre and cabaret performances and lectures on the most various subjects, presented by outstanding artists, scholars and other intellectuals from Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia. The illustrated weekly "Picture Post" of April 6th, 1940, published a report entitled: "'Refugees - Allies or Enemies?'" The report comprised portraits of a selection of the hundreds of refugees who had enriched the culture and learning of their respective "host-countries" - from Einstein to Richard Tauber and Bruno Walter, from Kokoschka to Conrad Veidt, Elisabeth Bergner, Stefan Zweig and many more.

And yet even I, as a child, was able to observe that the "refugee" was not quite recognised as their equal by most English people, remaining a second-class citizen in their country of immigration. How many depressing and humiliating hours did artists and scholars, whose achievements went down in the annals of the history of world culture, have to spend lobbying rich patrons, without whom their talents would have wasted away, and who had to live in poverty and wait for long periods in exile!

In Oxford my family was often invited to the big house of two musical and charitable ladies - Miss Ruth and Miss Rosemary Spooner. On Sunday afternoons they opened their door to refugees. They had money and some influence in the circles of high society. They offered tea and dainty, decorative sandwiches-tasty and pretty to look at, but not suited as a meal for people with healthy appetites. The first time I was at that house for tea, I made my mother feel embarrassed by taking the polite invitation to help myself seriously, and picking up a number of the little sandwiches and transporting the whole lot into my mouth at once. -which Mr. Mackintosh would doubtlessly also have strictly condemned.... After tea

strange "party-games" were played - strange, because I considered that, while there was nothing unusual about children playing "musical chairs", dashing about in the room in the attempt to snatch one of the chairs, I found this rather ridiculous behaviour in adults.

After the games, Miss Ruth - an elderly, skinny, tall woman, with a grey plait wound in a wreath around her head and dreamy, light, mild eyes in an ethereal face - sat down at the piano and performed works by Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Schubert and other classical composers with great artistic skill and musicality. Sometimes she would play together with Miss Rosemary, her sister, who was a cellist of considerable quality - slightly smaller and fuller, with reddish hair combed back and gathered in a bun, with grey-green, smiling eyes.

On these afternoons I met various people, who had played in well-known orchestras, or as soloists before large audiences in Vienna, Berlin and Prague, performed on leading stages, or published books in large editions - but who were happy, as refugees, to be able to pay their weekly rent for their furnished room to their grumbling, bickering landlords and landladies, working as assistant waiters, messengers, factory hands, cleaners, etc....

I also noted that, just as there had been quite a number of Jews in Vienna, who tried to escape anti-Semitism by being christened, and making every effort to assimilate in the Catholic "Aryan" society, some refugees in England, suffering from a similar inferiority complex, tried with all their might and main to conceal their continental-European origin, to deny their mother language, conversing exclusively in English, and endeavouring to behave in a particularly "English" manner. There were a number of contradictions between theory and practice, which puzzled me: at school we were taught to respect democracy, freedom, justice and tolerance, and always to stand up for these values. We were educated to selflessness and readiness to help others, to despise despotism, brutality and violence. We were taught to appreciate and protect the beauty of art and nature. I am certain that each of our teachers was

firmly convinced of the correctness of what they taught us. We were at war against the Nazis, whose brutality and injustice I knew from personal experience. At school and over the media we were made to believe, that our side embodied all the good and positive qualities, whereas all the vice was exclusively on the side of the enemy. Yet our "good" side was clearly responsible for many disreputable actions, such as, for instance, the cruel and unjust colonial rule in countries of Africa and Asia - discussed only in as far as the relevant events had taken place at a safe distance in the past. In this way people who found good reasons to justify colonial rule were able to idolise the freedom fight of Garibaldi and the French Revolution - but condemned and undifferentiatingly rejected the October Revolution of 1917, as an act of rioting by a brutalised, primitive and criminal mob.

I imagined people, who had displayed unusual courage and self-sacrifice, risking their lives in the fight against tyrants such as Hitler, above all Communists, to be ideal heroes without blemish. I had grown up in a family and circle of friends, and in the secure and protected atmosphere of a boarding school for girls mostly with a cultivated background, where I had experienced no contradictions between words and deeds, and I was shocked, when I occasionally came across individuals whom I regarded as "ideal heroes", whose conduct revealed moral weaknesses. Although I had read a great deal about people of intelligence, abilities and basically good character qualities, but who had never had a chance to acquire education and culture, and who were crude and even violent in their behaviour towards others, and became involved in struggles against despotism and injustice, performing acts of heroism, without conscious philosophical or moral considerations, but simply because they had no choice, if they wanted to survive.

I was a school girl at the time; but I witnessed how many adults, then and in subsequent times - who had been sincerely dedicated to the ideals of Communism and who had defended those ideals with courage and self-sacrifice, left the party in indignation and disappointment, and turned away from their

former convictions when they recognised that those ideals could not be materialised without side effects such as brutality, injustice, abuse of power and narrow-minded, petty bureaucracy - the very things they had set out to combat by becoming Communists!

My undifferentiated, naive way of regarding everything in black or white, developed during those years of childhood, caused me much pain in later years of sobering up, when circumstances gradually forced me to realise that nothing in life could be only black or only white, and that reality had to be faced and coped with as that which it was....

The war came closer to our peaceful school oasis amidst the green fields of Somerset. Night after night we could hear the bombs exploding over Bristol, like the crashes and thuds of distant thunder, and see the flashes of fire like lightning or fireworks on the horizon. We lay in our beds and heard the threatening drone of the approaching German bombers, and the next morning on the news we heard about the destruction they had caused during the night in various parts of the country. Many girls had fathers, brothers or uncles in the armed forces, and on many days letters arrived with the sad news that somebody's relatives had been killed or wounded in action, or were reported missing.

During the holidays I was informed at the Refugee Club, the "FÖJ", or by articles in "Soviet War News" or "Soviet Weekly" about the campaigns of the partisans in Yugoslavia and France, the Resistance movement in Scandinavia and Holland, and Nazi atrocities. It worried me that all these things were happening, with young people of my own age or even younger actively involved, while I was living a relatively untroubled life far away in security. But that was a matter which I could not discuss with anybody. Here and there I indicated what was going on in my mind in talks with my father, but he kept on telling me that the best contribution to the fight against Hitler was to make the best use of every opportunity to learn, because after the war there would be a great shortage and demand for people who had a chance to acquire skill and knowledge.

Whereas a few years ago it had still been a matter of good form to show an anti-Soviet attitude, the entry of that country into the war on the side of the Allies all of a sudden brought Russian music, literature and art into fashion.

In 1942 Miss Humphrey sent a classmate named Angela Bailey and myself to the nearby village of South Petherton once a week to learn Russian with the wife of the local vicar. It was a rare exception that an English country vicar should have had an opportunity just before the war to visit the Soviet Union - and an even greater exception that he should have

brought home a Russian wife. She had learned English at school and had quite a good command of the language. They had two little girls, who looked like pictures in a book of Russian fairy tales: blond and blue-eyed, with round faces, wearing red kerchiefs on their heads, they were reminiscent of the Russian puppeteer Obrastsov's doll "Tyapa". Angela and I had tea at the vicarage, served from a Samovar. We listened with tense interest when she told us about her childhood and youth in the Soviet Union. We had great fun learning the language, and we looked forward from one lesson to the next.

When we left CHS we took leave with tears and embraces.

Miss Humphrey had also envisaged other events to enhance our education. At that time the League of Nations arranged various activities for young people, including a training course entitled "Education for World Citizenship", extending over several days, for pupils of senior classes, with lectures by well-known scientists and politicians. In a notebook which I had used then, and which I still have, I saw the names of Sir John Boyd-Orr, Dr. Cecil Powell - who was President of the World Federation of Scientific Workers for several years after the war, Prof. Fournier, Dr. Heinrich Fraenkel, Sir Ralph Wedgwood and others.

Subjects of the lectures included, among others: "Science and Society"; "What are we Fighting for in this War?"; "Economic Problems"; "The Rise of Hitler-Germany"; "The Fall of the Third and the Fight for the Fourth French Republic"; "Colonial Problems"; "The American 'New Deal'"; "Soviet Experiments"; "Asia Tomorrow - the Chinese Contribution"; "The Place of Great Britain among the Democratic States". Subjects discussed in working groups included: "The ILO" (International Labour Organisation); "Science and the Future"; "The Problem of Japan", and others.

Leafing through my notes, I was surprised, how clearly those scientists and politicians foresaw so many developments which were actually to take place during the following four decades.

Once again Angela Bailey and I were selected to represent CHS there.

At that course I became acquainted with my first "real boy friend".

Christopher Wright was a tall, sporty, good-looking boy, with fair hair and blue eyes, with a slightly turned-up nose - cheerful, lively and of unusual intelligence.

On endless walks across the fields around the grounds of the building in which the course took place, Christopher and I quickly found a common language. It seemed quite natural that we remained friends after the end of the course. Christopher was living with his divorced mother and his brother Roger in an attractive country house not far from Oxford. I often went to see him, and soon felt at home there. I was attracted most of all by the large big grand piano on which I was allowed to play, and Christopher listened for hours with admiration.

His brother Roger was called up to the army shortly after his engagement, and was killed in Italy a few weeks before the end of the war. Christopher and I were soon considered to be a couple, but I had just turned 16, and I was firmly resolved to return to Austria after the war. I had no intention to tie myself and to start a family life at that stage, before I had started to live an adult life and to do something in the spirit of the ideas I had grown up with. The parting hurt - but just then I left CHS and changed to a new school, in order to spend the coming two years preparing for university entrance.

The years at Oxford High School and then at the university were among the most fulfilling of my life.

In my class at Oxford High School there were a number of very gifted girls: Betty Jennings -today a widely published poetess; Rosemary Allen is a prominent literary critic; Margaret Cairns is a musician; Elly Horovitz owns and directs a well known publishing firm, to mention only a few. At that school, as in CHS, I found friends with whom I have maintained close links up to the present.

It was a time of heated discussions, of intense search for the meaning of life, for the part which was assigned to us in life, on the threshold of adult age.

As already mentioned, I attended the meetings of the Free Austrian Youth group at the refugee hostel in New Inn Hall Street in the centre of Oxford on several evenings a week, and a Marxist circle there. The young people in the group were working in different occupations - in industry, agriculture, or in domestic service. Hardly any others beside myself were pupils or students. We all had great expectations of life, we could hardly wait to return to Austria, where we were resolved to build up something entirely new, far better than before. It is said that anticipation is the greatest joy; as yet many illusions were not destroyed. As yet we could still be full of hope and enthusiasm; we could dream, wish, and believe that everything was clear: black or white. The grey tones in between the two extremes, the contradictions, the reality behind all our illusions, the disappointments and the bitterness - all these things were still in the remote future. We argued, we philosophised, we played music, we composed, wrote poetry and prose, we recited, in many moonlit summer nights, on many long winter evenings, in smoky rooms, in the open air. Like many of my age, I also had rows with my family - above all with my mother and my brother. My mother, overburdened by cares, worries, and work, was nervous and irritable. To me her whole appearance was like one single reproach. My mother simply did not fit in with my life in those days - a carefree, interesting, exciting and varied life that mainly took place outside home. My mother was working in the office of the Cooperative Society; a woman in her forties, with life experience and intellectual interests, with a cultivated, educated background, who had a hard time behind her, she was obliged to do unqualified work, together with girls of 15, 16 and 17, with a minimum of education and culture, belonging to the lowest social sections, who had fun in insulting and annoying the "queer old foreigner". The way to work every morning was a torture. Often she had red, swollen eyes from crying. In addition she was plagued by continuous financial worries. My father, who gave a few lessons to private patients each week, working on some days of the week at public hospitals teaching seriously handicapped children and giving instructions to the educational staff, had a small income, not enough to maintain a family - especially as he often taught children of poorer parents free of charge. My mother earned very little at the Coop. She therefore spent hours after work and on the week-end at her old "Singer" sewing machine, making little bags and table cloths out of coloured oil cloth for sale to quite a large circle of private customers.

I have no idea how she managed to cope with all her work and the household. My father was little help - unskilled and uninterested in domestic work, and I must say in all honesty, that I was a rare example of egoism in that respect; only my brother had mercy, and assisted my poor mother in her domestic chores. He was not happy at the grammar school he attended. He had always dreamed of becoming a violinist, and even at an early age he had shown considerable talent. Yet that dream was not to come true. He was soft-hearted, sensitive and lacked the hard and inconsiderate "elbow-push" to assert himself. The Abbatts, our "second parents", had rather a different relationship with him, whereas to me they were at that time even closer than

my own parents and to the world of my interests. They were involved in the political life of the time and they were surrounded by interesting representatives of the progressive English and continental European intellectual élite - and they had less worn nerves and patience with me than my mother, who had to carry an incomparably heavier burden of life. Whereas I was selfish and coldhearted towards my family in those days, without wanting or being aware of it, my brother was more sympathetic, understanding and suffered with my mother. That was why, for some years, my family moved into the background of my activities and immediate interests.

By the time I realised the heartlessness of my behaviour years after, it was too late; my mother died in 1981...

I enrolled as a student at St. Anne's College in Oxford.

A German refugee girl named Otti Krall, was assigned to me as tutorial partner for the tutorials in the main subjects - German and French Language and Literature - for the latter I had selected the period of the late 19th and the early 20th century-. Like our tutor for German Literature, Dr. Blochmann from Düsseldorf, Otti also came from the Ruhr basin.

I also went to seminars for conversation in the two languages and for Old French and German, with classes of about a dozen students, and to lectures, read by the cream of the academic scholars of Central Europe, who were concentrated at universities in Britain and the United States during the war. These also included our tutor, Frau Dr. Blochmann, and Prof. Dr. Stahl from Munich, who read in the subject History of German Literature of the period I had selected. These lectures were always overcrowded; students were sitting on the window sills, or standing at the back, if they arrived too late to find a seat. The discussions at those lectures were heated to the extreme.

The outcome of the war was within sight, young people were full of hopes and questions, and Prof. Stahl's lectures and replies to our questions.

stimulated reflection, critical thinking, independent assessments and the striving to acquire knowledge. In our tutorials, in which Dr. Blochmann, a brilliant specialist in her subject, was available exclusively to my partner and myself, a subject was given to us for research and on which we were required to write an essay, which we presented at the following tutorial; we each read our essay, and then criticised each other under the guidance of Dr. Blochmann, in a discussion which sometimes became so heated and extended that I can hardly understand, how Dr. Blochmann managed to keep to her time-table. I find it even harder to understand how a tutor could cope with the greatly enlarged number of students today within the scope of that very individualised system - which, of course, allows each student to enjoy the maximum benefit of the thorough treatment of all subjects under investigation.

During the happy years as a university student I spent many inspiring evenings at the Refugee Club at St. Philipp's and St. James' Church Hall and the Austrian youth group in New Inn Hall Street. Apart from art, music, literature and politics in general, the future of Austria was the focus of discussions. We all had the idea that after the defeat of Hitler - the outcome of the war, by that time, was clear beyond doubt - there would be a great swing to the left, not only in Austria, but also in Germany and Czechoslovakia. It seemed to us, that the world must now have recognised, how capitalist social systems had led to a situation which had allowed a creature like Hitler to rise to power, and to unleash a war costing the lives of 50 million people - 20 million in the Soviet Union alone and of 6 million Jews - over half of European Jewry.

We had varying ideas about the nature of that swing to the left -but all differed radically from that which was actually to take place in Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia during the following years and decades....

The night of May 7th -8th, 1945 I awoke from an unusual noise: trains and cars were hooting, church bells were ringing, people were shouting and cheering. I ran to the window, and saw people rushing out into the street in their night dresses and pyjamas, with dishevelled hair, straight out of bed - laughing crying, embracing...

The war in Europe was over- peace was won!

A new era of world history had just dawned...

After graduating from St. Anne's, I started to work in my first job. The daughter of my landlady, who had let me a room while I was a student - university students could either live in college or in rooms approved by the university - had obtained employment for me at the school where she was teaching herself - a small private school in North Oxford.

Mary Harrison, a tall, stately woman, with mild grey-blue eyes in a round face, framed by a dark-blond wreath of hair, was then around forty. She had returned to England from South Africa just before the war. With the most sincere and honest intentions she had gone to Africa to help to prepare African girls for a useful and fulfilled life. A convinced Christian, Mary had gone to teach at a mission school in South Africa, but in disgust and protest against the disgraceful racism practised by the white South African government, against which she felt powerless, she had left the country, after she had trained and educated a generation of African girls as teachers, to whom she had passed on the determination not to put up with the yoke of race discrimination.

In England Mary was also working as a teacher. At the time she had helped me to find employment, she was teaching English language and literature at the said private school, named "Crane's Court" after its owner, a Miss Crane. That female, stampeding about the place, slightly bent forward, with her strands of dark hair with streaks of grey and a side parting fell into her face, almost covering her dark, piercing eyes, always reminded me of... Adolf Hitler in a female edition and of minor significance.

A long time after I had left the school, Mary wrote that: "Miss Crane was becoming increasingly Hitlerite"...

When I first began to work there, it was still possible to find teaching posts at English private schools without a teachers' diploma. The teaching staff of "Crane's Court" included women - apart from a few qualified university graduates - who were not qualified teachers, and the pay depended largely on the employer, who was not obliged to pay for holidays or sick leave.

The private schools therefore had greatly varying standards - some of excellent quality, and others being no more than a commercial enterprise that happened to trade with the education of children - as others traded with consumer goods, food or other commodities.

The state schools, which were free of charge, mostly did not provide their pupils with more than they needed for working in lowpaid, unskilled occupations, and parents who could afford to pay school fees would try to find a good private school for their children - a school of Quakers, or other religious communities, an "experimental" school headed by men and women with progressive, new educational ideas (Waldorf, Steiner and similar schools), or a grammar or a public school, to which a certain number of children were able to win scholarships.

In 1949 a new school law was passed in Britain which provided fixed minimum salaries, with paid holidays and sick leave, and stipulated the employment only of fully qualified teachers.

When I first started at "Crane's Court" I had to be grateful to have found a job at all, never mind that the weekly pay was no more than £4.-, without paid holidays and without paid sick leave. I had to be grateful that the hours of work at school were only from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - plus the hours required for correcting exercise books, planning lessons for the next day - and then, of course the work which every woman has to do in her household after an exhausting day of work.

I was completely worn out when I came home from work; my throat was aching from all the talking, my feet were sore from standing, and in addition I not only had to teach in my own subject - French - but also in other subjects where Miss Crane needed a teacher: the fundamentals in reading, writing and arithmetic for school beginners, English and history at times when there was a lack of teaching staff for these subjects...

The works by the Soviet educationalist and writer A.S. Makarenko had always been among my favourite books. This proved to be a great help during the first months of my professional work. I tried to apply his methods of making the best use of the individual qualities of each child. This was by no means an easy matter, and very often I was almost desperately discouraged and exhausted.

I did not work at that school for very long. I had just managed to win the confidence of my pupils and to establish a good relationship with them, when Miss Crane threw me out, because she considered that I "polluted the children with red poison", and because the new school law obliged her to pay a better salary, with paid holidays and sick leave to fully qualified teachers, whose number on her staff she was therefore obliged to reduce. She gave me good references and praised me for "nevertheless" having obtained good "academic" results in my work - but I knew that I would never find another teaching job in Oxford.

Not long afterwards I set out on my bicycle to answer a newspaper advertisement for an assistant at a municipal day nursery to look after a group of problem children.

The pay was even less than at "Crane's Court", but I had no choice.

My task there consisted in looking after a small group of orphans or semi-orphans, and children whose parents were in jail or had been deprived of their parental authority.

They were supposed to be educated to a stage, when they could be sent to a nursery for normal children.

An extremely tough job for someone without experience - and even for an experienced specialist - at a pay rate below that of a street sweeper. I was nevertheless resolved to make the best of the job, to give these unwanted little creatures a bit of human warmth, to make them feel like human beings, to convey to them the fundamentals of a sense of self-respect, human solidarity and civil courage.

When I had just managed to begin coming to terms with the little boys in my care, turning them from a collection of yelling, fighting, wild things with dirty habits into a group of children who could play and laugh and listen, at least for a while, I came to work one morning to find the room empty. The children had been found fit to be transferred to an ordinary nursery for "normal" children.

My services were no longer required.

At "Crane's Court" a cup of tea was served to the teachers after lunch by an individual with long, dangling hair, samples of which were often swimming in the tea, and whose feet stuck in indescribable, torn, rather dirty rags, so that Mary had nicknamed her "Flannel Foot".

When she bent over me to pour out the tea, she used to say in an ominous voice: "Mark my words... the world's going under... it's written in the stars and the stars never lie..."

When she repeated the same words on the following day, I said that we were still alive and the world was still going strong, "Flannel Foot would reply: "It ain't yet.... but it will go under... you mark my words!"

I have never believed in mystical signs or predictions - but the flow of events after my dismissal from the nursery might almost be interpreted in that sense...

After graduating from the university, I married the artist Josef Brück, whom I had met at the Austrian youth group. It all began with romantic illusions and an attitude of protest against my mother, who quickly recognised that this union could not be of longer duration: there are people who are incompatible for various reasons. My school education had led me to believe that a woman was doomed under all circumstances to accept her husband and to remain faithful to him to the grave, regardless of his behaviour towards her. On the other hand I have never been a martyr by nature, but the unconscious moral coercion was always present, and the conflict between it and my natural inclinations to independence and pride finally caused a rupture.

For the time being, however, we shared a room in the house of a woman whom we nicknamed "The bug", because she was flat and smelly like that species of living things, and she crawled about in our possessions as soon as we had gone out, leaving clear traces of her presence. She was very demanding - we were not to pull the lavatory chain after 10 p.m. and we were not allowed to have coloured people visiting us in her house.

Like many other houses in England, that house also was inhabited by mice and men. One night I was awakened by a terrible clatter. The mice had eaten their way into the walls, so that the boards in a wall-cupboard, where I kept our cups and saucers, supported by a ledge in the wall, fell down and all the crockery broke into fragments.

On the following day I lost my job at the nursery. If that was not an eloquent omen!

I was firmly resolved to return to Austria after the war. We had been prepared for this at the Austrian youth group. But after my marriage it turned out in the course of efforts to obtain the necessary documents, that my husband had no right to claim an Austrian passport. His parents had come to Vienna after the First World War from a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy which belonged to the Soviet Union after 1945, and they had never obtained Austrian citizenship. His parents, sister and brother had been deported by the Nazis, and it was unknown whether they were still alive. We decided to go to the Soviet Embassy in London, with the intention of trying to obtain passports and to build up a new life in that country, helping to heal the wounds inflicted by the war, which we had been able to spend in the security of a country not occupied by the Nazis. To me the thought of going to live in the country which had symbolised all the ideals with which I had grown up was most exciting and attractive.

In the past years I had often sat with my ears glued to the radio, trying to catch the powerful voice of the announcer Yuri Levitan amidst the atmospheric noises, saying: "Govorit Moskva, govorit Moskva!" Even without understanding more than a few words of what he said in the transmission, that voice and the bars of music of Radio Moscow, like the pictures I had seen in books and films of the Kremlin with the red stars on

top of its spires, were symbolic of the ideas mediated by my parents and their environment. The opportunity to go and live in that country of my dreams had moved into the range of tangible reality.

We began to learn Russian with almost fanatical fervour; a large map of the Soviet Union was spread out on the floor of our room. We dreamed of a future, identifying ourselves with the heroes of the books by Gorky, Fadeyev, Gladkov and Ehrenburg, and our watches were set to Moscow time... One day we mounted our bicycles and we rode the 60 miles from Oxford to London. There we found a public lavatory to change into some more respectable clothes, which we had brought along in bicycle bags, and, while my husband, who was an artist, took some of his best works in a large cardboard folder and disappeared in the building of the Soviet Embassy, I waited in a small café opposite, quite giddy with excitement.

It seemed an eternity until he reappeared, with flushed face and shining eyes. He told me that he had been well received; the Consul, a younger man, had been friendly and listened to him with attention. Then he had fetched some of his colleagues, who had been impressed by the pictures. Finally he had said that the Soviet Union, which had lost the flower of its youth, needed young talented people. We should both learn Russian quickly and patiently wait; there might be an opportunity to include us in the list of Soviet citizens scattered all over the world wishing to be "repatriated". It was of no importance to us in which part of the vast land of Communism we were sent to begin our new life. At that time we had no idea of the true situation which prevailed in that country. We had no idea of the mistrust cultivated there against foreigners in general, and German speaking foreigners in particular; nor of the general prejudices against Jews and Gypsies among wide sections of the population - which still prevail up to the present day, four decades after the end of the war - attitudes which we, in ignorance and blind idealism, had associated only with Hitler and the Nazis, which we ourselves had experienced.

In the years from 1947 to 1949 the time of waiting, full of impatience, nervous tension, hopes and dreams began... little did we know then, that this was only the beginning of all the endless waiting in store during the coming decades: in the waiting rooms of offices for stamps, documents, signatures by "competent gentlemen" ("colleagues", "comrades"), who happened to be at a meeting, consultation, on a business trip, on vacation or sick leave just on the day of an appointment eagerly awaited and arranged long before; waiting for the final reply to an application for word of official acceptance or rejection of work sent in somewhere; waiting in long lines; waiting for hours, for days, for months, for years, waiting again and again...

After that first interview, only a few weeks passed before we received a letter from London signed by a man named Yuri Filimonov. We were informed that we were now on the list of people to be repatriated to the Soviet Union, and that we should now wait patiently for further information. Between Christmas and the New Year we were officially invited to attend a New Year reception at the Embassy of the USSR in London for "Soviet citizens living abroad". It was a letter in Russian. We treated it like a precious jewel.

On the day of the reception it was icy cold. The winter of 1947/48 was one of the coldest winters in England. We packed our best clothes and shoes into our bicycle bags, cycled the 60 miles to London, pushing our bicycles up the long hill near High Wycombe, panting with exertion. At the Austrian Centre in Paddington we literally thawed from top to toe after the long

ride in the biting wind, as we enjoyed the hot soup with liver dumplings served there at a low price. This time we left our bicycles and old clothes at the Austrian Centre, and we both went from there to the Soviet Embassy. The reception was to begin at 5 p.m.. We stood at the door at 3 p.m.. The frost was biting our faces, snow flakes whirled through the air, and the icy wind penetrated into our bones. Of course it would have been improper to turn up two hours early - and so we spent the time walking around the building uncounted times. My feet were numb with cold in my best shoes without warm socks when, at last, we crossed the threshold of the Embassy behind a voluminous elderly couple wrapped in thick fur coats, stepping out of a large black car. I felt as though I was dreaming: we had entered a big warm room with a soft carpet that swallowed every sound; the soft music of the rousing song "Polyushka Polye", a partisan song, associated with romantic exploits and feats of heroism, which I had first heard on a grammophone record at the Abbatts' cottage in Ibstone near High Wycombe, was heard in the background.

When we were told that we should see the first performance abroad of the film "The Young Guard", based on the novel by Fadeyev, my heart almost burst with joy.

The numerous elegant men and women soundlessly moved in the spacious room, past palm trees in large buckets in the corners. Feeling rather lost and embarrassed, we sought shelter behind one of the spreading branches of one of the plants, and after a while the Consul appeared. He welcomed and shook the hand of each one of the guests, including us, and said in English: "You will concentrate on learning Russian, and the time will fly past..." Then we all went up a wide staircase covered with a red velvet carpet, past two large portraits on each side: one of Lenin and one of Stalin - and then entered a cinema room. The lights gradually went out, the glittering curtain was drawn aside, and we witnessed on the screen events that had taken place in the recent past in the Ukraine. While I had been learning at school in security, playing tennis, enjoying myself and getting up to all kinds of nonsense in my spare time, people of my age and younger had been involved in deadly dangerous activities fighting against the Nazis and facing death with heroism, in full awareness of the meaning of each of their moves. The young actors playing their parts were very close to the events which they depicted on the screen. That was probably the reason why they were so convincing. Everybody was deeply moved by this film.

It was late when we left, and we tramped on our bicycles in the freezing cold of the winter night, but I felt warm with agitation and as part of the experiences of that day. I had no doubt that soon we would be going to the Soviet Union to begin an entirely new, exciting, hopeful life. After all, we had been invited to attend this reception for "Soviet citizens living abroad" by an official letter addressed to us in Russian...

After I lost my job at the nursery I wrote a letter to the Soviet Embassy to inquire as to whether a decision on our application was within sight, describing our situation; a young artist more or less without work, and I, just dismissed from my employment. The letter was answered very soon, in friendly words of encouragement: we should hold out a little longer. And then - at the beginning of 1949 - another letter sent by the Diplomatic Mission of the Soviet Union in Great Britain: in English, formal, curt: signed with a name I could not decipher: according to the new legislative provisions, only persons having relatives or trustworthy guarantors in the Soviet Union, or about whose presence in the country in the past there was reliable documentation, could be repatriated... We had the right to make a renewed application after three years.

Full stop.

The abrupt end of a dream, too good to be true.

What next?

I have never been one to give up without a fight.

This way was excluded; so another way had to be found.

I sat down to write letters to all diplomatic missions of the newly established socialist democracies in the countries of Eastern Europe - under the illusion that Communism had arisen in all of those states, offering a hopeful future to their inhabitants. The British media designated the governments of those countries of Eastern Europe as Communist - which meant to me, according to my convictions, that there could not be inhuman bureaucrats, unjust discrimination, abuse of power., hypocrisy, and above all no anti-Semitism and racism in such countries. I firmly believed that young people who had escaped extermination by the Nazis and now sought a new national "family"-adherence and new tasks, after the events of past years had ruled out a return to their own country, would be received by the "humane" socialist states - especially since so many capable young people had been killed in the war. We were resolved to help to the best of our abilities in building up a life without persecution, exploitation and injustice. We felt that this was what we owed to a destiny which had spared us from passing through the chimneys of Auschwitz, and allowed us to learn things that could be of use after the war.

In England we were foreigners. I felt very closely linked with Britain and English life, as a result of my school education and university years, my friends and my "second parents", Paul and Marjorie Abbatt but I had always lived with the idea of returning to Vienna as soon as I could. I must admit, that I always thought of Vienna as the place which I had left in 1938, not taking into account that Vienna had greatly changed in the course of seven years of Nazi rule and the war. The pre-war life and very many of my friends and relatives were gone from Vienna, for ever. When I thought of Vienna, it was always with the idea that everything should not only be restored, but greatly improved and renewed. Even in our small Oxford group of the Free Austrian Youth, there were many who thought in the same way.

Since my marriage had frustrated all my plans, as I felt obliged to go wherever my husband went, and to help him to assert his art, I had to turn to new hopes, dreams and expectations; and now the first new dream had also been destroyed.

I was not willing under any circumstances to give up. I wrote those letters to the representations of the socialist states of Eastern Europe inspired by hope and optimism; ardently, with heart-felt sincerity.

Not one of the diplomatic missions of those "humane socialist" countries even so much as confirmed the receipt of my letter. The most valuable wedding present was a Philipps radio. On short waves Radio Moscow could be heard more or less clearly, and on medium waves radio stations of all parts of Europe could be received.

One day, sitting in bed with otitis and a bandaged head, knitting a pullover, I heard familiar working class songs coming from the radio. The station I happened to have tuned into was transmitting a live broadcast from Leipzig in the Soviet Occupied Zone of Germany of the "Third Parliament of the Free German Youth". At that moment Gerhart Eisler, a prominent German Communist and the brother of the well-known composer Hanns Eisler, had just arrived in Leipzig, after his adventurous escape from the "witch-hunters" in the USA, on board the Polish ship "Batory". The reporter gave an enthusiastic account of the scene, when Eisler was carried into the conference hall on the shoulders of young men in the blue shirts of the Free German Youth (FDJ) amidst stormy applause. In his address, Eisler inspired the young audience with his vision of a bright future in a liberated, democratic Germany, which would set an ultimate end to the Nazi past. Carried away by the words of Eisler, I tore the bandage from my head, hopped out of bed, got dressed and left the house to obtain travel papers for a short stay in West Germany with the assistance of a former admirer.

Once in Germany -no matter where - so I imagined, it should hardly be too complicated to get to the Soviet Occupied Zone of the country, and from there to the Soviet Union: let them

lock me up for a while, I thought, after all, how could they know what I was up to; but -Soviet Communists were just and decent, they would soon recognise that I was not an enemy, and would set me free....

In 1965 my husband's brother, whom we had believed to be dead long ago, suddenly turned up. In 1938 he had escaped from Vienna to his grandmother in Poland. When the war broke out the Nazis deported him to a concentration camp. In the autumn of 1940 he managed to escape; half starved, in the striped uniform of a concentration camp inmate, he dived into the icy water of the river Bug, resolved to make his way to the Soviet Union and there to volunteer for the Red Army to fight the Nazis with his last drop of blood. The Soviet frontier guards, to whom he wanted to surrender were dead drunk. When he said that he was a Jew, escaped from a Nazi concentration camp, they nearly beat him to death, bawling that the Nazi buggers might have spared them the trouble of bumping him off. A sober officer intervened at the last moment and saved his life. Yet this did not prevent his condemnation to twelve years forced labour in Siberia for "illegally crossing the frontier"...

In 1949 I knew nothing of such things; and if anybody had told me a story of that kind, I would probably have accused him of vicious slander, refusing to believe a word.

We sold all our belongings - and the things not sold or packed up and taken along have long since rotted on the rubbish heap in Kennington near Oxford.

At a surplus army store we acquired discarded army bicycle side bags made of very tough canvas, of great carrying capacity. Friends rummaged in their drawers and cupboards and gave us a few Belgian coins on the way. This was important, because at that time the first significant devaluation of the pound since the end of the war was in progress. With the proceeds from the sale of our possessions and the Belgian coins - they had holes and could be worn on a necklace - we started on our trip; by bicycle, with Youth Hostel cards and tickets for the ferry boat across the Channel at the price of

five pounds each - as "luggage". On a bright September morning of the year 1949 our venture began.

England was crossed quickly. On the way from Oxford to Dover we only spent one night at a Youth Hostel. Until the early hours of the morning we had animated discussions with the students and other young people there - on the meaning of life, about the terms "freedom", "democracy", "justice", on religion, politics and all questions which moved young people in the first years after the war.

The Youth Hostel was situated in a former country estate with a vast park, with swimming pool, tennis courts and its own farm; the milk served at breakfast was wonderfully creamy and fresh.

Travelling as "ordinary freight" across the Channel was the cheapest way, but by no means pleasant. After a few hours among crates, bags and boxes, we were unloaded in Belgium. We were fastened, together with our bicycles, to a platform carrying all sorts of commodities, and a crane transported us, dangling from lofty heights above the oily sea water, to the ground. A coachman swearing in Flemish, whose clattering horse-cart nearly ran us over, brought home to us, that in contrast to the smooth asphalt roads in England, there was right-hand traffic on the uneven cobblestone paved roads in Belgium.

The nearest Youth Hostel was 27 miles away. The beds and café filtre for breakfast were paid in some of our Belgian coins. The next stage, from Bruges to Brussels, extended over a distance of 100 kilometers. It was hot, the roads were bumpy, and in the attempt to pick a few red apples from a tree, I tore my dress. We were hungry, but wanted to spend as little of our capital of £54 as we could. The dirt in my face and the torn dress were first noted by the concierge of an elegant apartment house on the Boulevard Brandt-Whitlock in Brussels, where we had an address of relatives or friends in England. The concierge scrutinised us with a sceptical, disdainful and resentful glance, as two ragamuffins on bicycles, who had no business to enter such select premises, especially at that late hour of the night. But after having examined our travel papers,

issued in England, and having heard of our intention to wait for the return from a party of M. and Mme . H..., she concluded that we must be "rich English people" -knowing, as a woman of the world, that rich English people were often badly dressed, and badly dressed English people were often rich, she became almost polite. When a nearby church bell announced, that it was three o'clock in the morning, M. and Mme H., accompanied by a girl and a boy in their late-teens came rustling in, emanating the scent of expensive perfume and aromatic cigarettes.

They were the relatives of friends known to my family for decades: despite their evident upper-class status, they were refreshingly cordial, welcoming us with warm-hearted sympathy, without pomp and circumstance. As though they did not notice our disreputable appearance, they simply offered us a hearty snack, a bath and a good rest in white, soft beds. Our bicycles, which both had flat tyres, were repaired the following day, and our further transportation to an address in Aachen was arranged .

In the afternoon we marched along the streets of Brussels at the head of a demonstration of Belgian anti-fascists against the revival of German militarism, under a red banner and singing the International.

And then, at the railway station in Brussels, I had my first encounter since my early childhood in 1933 with Germans who were not refugees, but Germans living in Germany. Pushing, shoving and cursing, they crowded around the door of a train which had come in empty. A woman and a crying child were constantly being pushed aside by men with voluminous bodies and hard elbows.

We asked her why she was so anxious to get into the train by this door assaulted by a crowd, whereas the whole train was empty and there was not a soul at the door of the other coaches.

With a perplexed look the woman followed us into another railway coach, which was completely empty. She said she was married in England and wanted to visit her mother in East Berlin.

"I'm going to Hamburg by train, and from there flying to Gatow, and then to East Berlin by S-Bahn (electric city train), That is the best way, you know, because otherwise you would have to use the interzonal express - and that is hell..."

In Cologne we remembered that our bicycles had only been sent as far as Aachen, whereas we had decided to travel to East Berlin by the same route as the woman in our compartment. We arrived in Cologne in the dead of night. The train only stopped there for a few minutes. In September 1949 the station of Cologne did not look much different from the way it looked after the last air-raid of the war. With a great effort and a bit of luck we managed to find a sleepy railway official, who arranged the transport of our bicycles as far as Hamburg - of course for far too much money.

The train had started to run out of the station when we jumped on at the last moment. During the night the train filled up with crowds of passengers. I had just dropped off to sleep, when a conductor roughly shook me by the shoulder, barking at me: "Hey you there! Your ticket!" And then: "Seventy-eight marks to pay!"

The new exchange rate of the devalued pound had not been fixed, and anyone was free to cheat us. We were charged at the rate of half the old value...

Hamburg was in a state of devastation and chaos. Ruins and heaps of rubble everywhere. Some people were extravagantly dressed and driving about in big, shining cars, but the majority were shabby, dressed in wooden clogs and clothes made of former uniforms or blankets and had grey, worn faces. They looked hungry, dissatisfied, or just despondent and gloomy. When we inquired about a Youth Hostel, we were regarded as completely mad: who would ask about a Youth Hostel in bomb-ravaged Hamburg in September 1949? We nevertheless discovered a place which might have been described as belonging to that category of establishments - not comparable, of course, to anything like the Youth Hostel in Dover, nor even with that in Bruges: a wooden barrack on a patch of waste land.

"You should thank your lucky stars", said an edgy, jagged, bony

young man, as he received the money to be paid for "bed and breakfast" in advance, examining our papers. "Two days later you would have found all this cleared by a bulldozer; a British military air base will be installed here."

In the night drunken homeless people came in from the streets, and shoved those already lying on the hard boards that served as beds into the furthest corner.

Breakfast consisted of coffee substitute, horrible sticky bread with a sour taste, and a bowl of thin, tasteless soup. We discovered a table-tennis table and were immediately challenged for a game. We played casually, without a great effort, which irritated our partners, who took it seriously, as though they were competing at an international contest. We did not relate the words "dirty black Gypsies" to ourselves; not yet. But when, on the way to the booking office of the British airline company BEA, we came across a gang of youths shouting the "Horst Wessel" song (hardly believable, but in fact it was really, the infamous Nazi song, with the words: 'when Jewish blood spurts from the knife...'), we began to wonder: what had we let ourselves in for??

We had to wait a long time for a ticket to Gatow; all planes were booked out.

It was a strange feeling when we boarded the aircraft, poorly dressed as we were, among smart, scented business men and women. I was aware of scornful glances in my direction; not many; people here seemed to be used to seeing all sorts of apparitions.

It was the first flight in my life. I was relieved when the aircraft touched the ground in Gatow.

And this was Berlin; the city in which I had been born twenty-two years before, and which I had left with my family sixteen years ago, just in time to avoid being among the millions who ended as clouds of smoke rising from the chimneys of Auschwitz, Treblinka or Maidanek.

It was a clear autumn day. We were sitting on a large block of rubble. Not long ago it had been part of a solid tenement house. It still had the oil paint and tiles of a kitchen wall

on one side, and on the other side fragments of the wall paper with a flower design which had decorated a drawing room or a bedroom, with a lighter patch in the place where a picture must have hung up to the moment when the bomb had hit the house. Rubble and debris were scattered all around. How long would it take before all this would be rebuilt into a city? 15, 20, 25 years? Would it ever again be a city?

A large, swaying double-decker bus, reminiscent of a pre-historic monster, appeared, slowly moving across the square. It stopped, and spat out passengers smelling of cold cabbage. The air around the rubble heap had a smell of dirty rags, burnt and rotting flesh; perhaps it was only imaginary - but whenever I think of the scene, I have that penetrating, evil smell in my nose...

The next task was to find a place to spend the night, suited to the remains of our capital, which was quickly melting away. The walrus-moustached policeman on duty in the small room of a police station in Charlottenburg telephoned endlessly in the attempt to help us in our search, and then said in a frustrated, tired tone of voice, shaking his head: "A cracked idea - to look for a Youth Hostel here in bombed-out Berlin!" Then he rummaged about among a heap of papers on his desk, picked up a noteblock, scribbled on it, tore off a leaf and handed it to us: "Take this and try your luck...it isn't a luxury hotel, but you can sleep there...25, Richard Wagner Strasse...There you are... And now it's closing time here, I should have been gone long ago..."

It was getting dark outside. The air was unpleasantly damp and cold, and it was beginning to drizzle. We felt hungry - but there was no shop, kiosk or restaurant anywhere near, and besides, hardly any shop would have been open at this hour; furthermore, we were short of money and we could not afford to spend more than the bare minimum. We therefore set out to find the Richard Wagner Strasse. This was not a simple matter, since there was nothing like a street to be seen in this field of devastation. Here and there I saw the outlines of a building against the darkening sky, with one or two lit-up windows indicating the presence of human beings, and the pale light

of a few scattered street lanterns, otherwise no sign of life - apart from the two of us, with rumbling tummies and the note of the policeman in hand.

Then I perceived a rusty name plate on a bent iron pole, inscribed with the name of the street we were looking for just recognisable in smudged, partly erased letters. The sign indicating the former street was there - but the pavement and the houses on both sides had been razed to the ground, their fragments sticking up into the air like uncanny jagged shapes of phantoms. The whole place was shrouded in deadly silence, not even the distant roar of traffic could be heard. About 100 metres away there was a street lantern, with the drizzling rain dancing in its pale light. Suddenly a bent human figure appeared, with a threadbare coat flung over head and shoulders. The apparition was there for a few seconds and then vanished in the ground, and then everything was as deserted as before. At first we thought we had seen a ghost, but then we decided to investigate the matter. In the place where the figure had disappeared we discovered a few worn down steps, which led up to an iron door. It gave way to a light pressure and opened with a creaking groan. A whiff of foul, stuffy air blew into my nose, and then the witch of the fairy tale "Hänsel and Gretel" stepped out of the dark - a hunch-backed old hag, with a wrinkled face and a large hooked nose, which hung down almost to the lower lip of her toothless mouth. Her head was covered by a darned sock, under which yellowish-grey tufts of hair stuck out. She held a smoking tallow candle on a cracked saucer in her gnarled, shaky hand. She raised the candle to our faces, cast a vicious and resentful glance at us out of screwed up eyes and croaked: "Password!"

I handed her the note of the walrus-moustached policeman, whereupon she nodded, with the sock she used as a night cap dangling into her face. She gave us a sign to follow her. "Look out," she muttered, "It's slippery and wet!"

The light of her candle was too weak to illuminate the surroundings. It was indeed very wet and slippery, on the ground and even on the walls along which we groped our way. At the end of this strange tunnel there was a door leading into a

cellar, overcrowded with people, in a veil of dim light, smoke and choking smells of sweat and bad air. "Come on, no more room in here," said the old woman. We made our way across the mass of human garbage, into a neighbouring cellar almost as stuffed full as the other. "Try to find a place here", said the old woman, swept the place with a blinking glance and withdrew.

There were bunks in three storeys along all the walls, each occupied by two or more bodies. The middle of the room was taken up by a large dirty table surrounded by a wooden bench. Men, women and children were sitting or lying around, some playing cards and smoking, others were chewing, some women were sewing, children were howling, quarrelling and bickering others were talking in subdued voices, and some were asleep. The bunk below me was occupied by a family of man, wife and two children, who had a terrible cough. They said that everything "over there" (meaning East Berlin), was coercion; they had even tried to force them to send their children to a TB sanatorium against their will.

And now they were free- to vegetate in this stinking hole to cough their lungs out and to infect others with their disease. We heard all sorts of tales of horror from refugees from the East, who had landed in the Richard Wagner Strasse in their escape to freedom.

It was an unpleasant night: as in Hamburg, this place was nothing but a last refuge for the homeless and destitute, and we were torn from sleep several times as filthy, smelly and in many cases drunk men and women invaded the room and squeezed themselves onto the overcrowded bunks. The sick children were coughing and crying. A pregnant woman began to shriek with pain and had to be taken away. Towards the morning I sank into a heavy sleep, but the night was over, and I was roused after a short while by a barking voice, shouting: "Come on, get up, out of here, quickly, clear out!" It was 5 a.m. A few policemen were standing at the door, checking the papers of all those squeezing past them. When they saw our papers, one of them murmured: "My god, couldn't you have found a more civilised place to spend the night??!!" He shook his head and

handed back the papers. " Try and find somewhere to have a good clean up - this den is full of vermin and disease. Make sure you don't leave things behind - and if you're new here, take care you don't land in the East Sector...with these papers!"

We were glad to get out into the fresh air. The last few hours had seemed like a nightmare.

In the daylight everything looked far less bleak and ghostly, and soon I spotted a shop selling milk and rolls. Then we asked our way to the S-Bahn and, inspite of the well meaning warning of the policeman, we crossed over to East Berlin. We wanted to look up a man whose name and address we had received from the friends in England, who had provided us with the pierced Belgian coins: an actor of the Schiffbauerdamm Theatre (today the Berliner Ensemble), named Friedrich Richter. As the train approached Friedrichstrasse station, I saw the name of the theatre in blue neon letters on the opposite bank of the Spree. We got out of the train, and were seized by a sudden fright and ran to a far corner of the station, hiding behind a telephone box - without really knowing why; men in dark blue uniforms, reminiscent of those of the SS, had formed a chain and held up people to search them. Bad memories of my childhood, coupled with the accounts I had heard about this part of the city made my heart beat violently as I watched the scene on the platform, until I hear a voice saying near by: "They've caught another of these smugglers!" At that moment the uniformed men - they were policemen in the navy blue uniforms they wore in those days- were taking away a fat loudly protesting woman. Her coat was open and I saw that she had several belts of cloth wound around her waist, in which she had caried butter and eggs... At the theatre we were given the actor's private address by a friendly woman. and we went there without delay.

There are actors who play the parts of great personalities with the best human qualities on the stage -but who are petty and vain in real life. Heroism on the stage costs nothing; the stage hero drops down with a dramatic gesture at the sound of

a bang out of a pop-gun, and rises a few minutes later to have his supper.

There are other actors, who are distinguished personalities of outstanding character qualities on and off the stage. They are not deceiving their audiences if they inspire them with deep emotion by the display of human greatness. Every one of their words is genuine and comes from the bottom of their hearts. Friedrich Richter belonged to that latter category of actors; he recently passed away at the age of nearly 90 years. Up to his last days he continued to enhance stage art by his magnificent presentations and reading recitals...

Men and women of this kind are not distinguished by spectacular glitter, but by modesty, courage and integrity. Even in the smallest parts in films and on television and on the stage, Friedrich Richter radiated that human greatness in the same way as in daily life, in every word, in every gesture and in every glance of his wise and kindly eyes...

That morning in 1949 we found him and his wife, the actress Amy Frank, in their apartment in the quiet green environment of the Amalienpark in Pankow.

Friedrich Richter asked us no more than the question: "And what do you intend to do here in Berlin?"

And then he went to the telephone.

"...I know, I know,...." I heard him say in a tone of calm insistence, "of course the League of Culture is no housing agency, but I thought that the League of Culture had something to do with human solidarity - or am I mistaken?"

Without many words he gave letters of recommendation, signed with his name, addressed to various persons of his circle of friends and acquaintances, asking them to help us in our first moves into a new life; he gave such letters to two young people, of whom he knew no more than that they had been given his address by close friends in England, and who had just arrived by bicycle out of the blue, without passports and visa and with practically no money.

When Friedrich Richter pronounced the words of Nathan the Wise they sounded particularly genuine...

That was how it all began, four decades ago.

On October 7th, 1949, squatting on the ruins of the Princesses' Palace, I watched the torchlights of the procession along the boulevard Unter den Linden, in honour of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic, which made the jagged ruins of the wrecked city appear as ghostly shadows of a fading past; many of the things which have since become reality were then still like a distant dream.

In an unusually mild summer night in Berlin, I can see myriads of coloured lights reflected by the dark water of the Spree outside my window, as I look back upon the time forty years ago, when I sat on top of a furniture van transporting the belongings of friends I had known in England and unexpectedly met in Charlottenburg on the way to fetch our bicycles deposited in Gatow. They were about to move from West to East Berlin. Playing a cheerful melody on my old mouth organ, squeezed in by tables, chairs and cupboards, I made my entry through the Brandenburg Gate, into a new era of my life...

Eva Brück

October 1989

EPILOGUE

"Denk' ich an Deutschland in der Nacht,
bin ich um meinen Schlaf gebracht"
(Heinrich Heine, Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen)

In 1949 I came to the country which was to be the German Democratic Republic for the following four decades. Thousands, indeed millions of people at that time looked full of hopes and optimism to that new state, arisen on German soil after the horrors of the Second World War.

I lived here during those four decades - from the beginning up to the bitter end.

Almost exactly forty years after the torch-light procession along the bomb-ravaged boulevard Unter den Linden, another demonstration of the popular masses moved along this and other streets of Berlin - re-arisen from the ruins and turned towards the future, in the words of the GDR-national anthem. That song was sung with enthusiasm, even years after the foundation of the GDR, when many of us had already been humiliated and discriminated, accused of the crimes of being "cosmopolitanists" or "western agents", etc., when we still excused everything: "childhood-diseases... after all, what could you expect? Yesterday's nazis could hardly be transformed into Communists or Socialists from one day to the other... have patience..."

We did have patience; and what became of it all?

What became of all the hopes and ideals which had brought us to Germany from exile, from the camps, from underground concealment?

Almost exactly forty years after the foundation of the GDR, on November 4th, 1989, we once again moved down the "Linden", full of hopes.

The Messrs. "Comrades", who had joined "The Party" just after the war, because it had seemed opportune to them - in the

have to barricade themselves in their four walls, behind steel doors and reliable locks, because young people without a future take to crime - how could we enjoy our newly won "freedom"? Enjoying anything here nowadays is the exclusive privilege of those who have the hardest elbows; unscrupulously taking advantage of others, deceivers, the Maffia - which has long ceased to be a special feature of Sicily or Naples.

The term "solidarity" has been reduced to an empty phrase these past forty years. Here in Germany - and presumably all over the world - the majority in the first place think about themselves; the workmate, the friend is pushed aside, deceived, undercut, if this serves one's own advantage. Each thinks - maybe not without some justification - "And who would take pity on me?!"

Culture today has become a luxury. Concert and theatre tickets are so expensive that few can afford to buy them. Everyone is burdened by cares and insecurity, so much time and energy has to be wasted on running from one authority to the next, on filling in endless forms and queuing or sitting in packed corridors - often in vain - so that there is no margin for aesthetic pleasures. At the end of a day we are exhausted and lack the strength for doing anything not absolutely essential for plain material survival; and if you lose your job, when you are too old to find another and too young to retire, you curse the day when you were born...

And yet, as I look out of the window into the night that envelops Berlin in a dark mantle, spangled with glittering, colourful lights, reflected in the dark water of the river Spree, everything seems untroubled and peaceful. It is late, the lights in many windows have gone out, and the traffic noise has faded. And in the morning a little titmouse on the balcony begins the day with a silvery song; the snow is melting, the air of Berlin has a taste of spring...



